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ABSTRACT

Designed as a forum for the exchange of ideas among humanities community college faculty, this journal addresses substantive disciplinary and curriculum issues in the humanities. This issue of the journal contains the following articles and reports (1) "Reanimating Tradition," by Robert N. Bellah, which looks at the instructor's role in "reanimating the old to gain knowledge of the new"; (2) "The Humanities and the 'New Student': Some Possibilities for Social Transformation," by L. Steven Zwerling, which focuses on the role the humanities can play in drawing students into the culture of higher learning; (3) commentaries on Zwerling's article by Constance Carroll, Joshua Smith, and Clifford Peterson; (4) "Who's Afraid of Cultural Literacy?" by Catharine R. Stimpson, which reviews the positions of four political schools regarding the meaning of cultural literacy and the purposes of the humanities; (5) "Contemplating the Success of American Political Life in a Bicentennial Era: Fortune, Virtue, and Constitutional 'Structures of Compromise'"; by Jose M. Peer; (6) "The Community College Scholar," by Linda Ching Sledge, which highlights the image problems of community college faculty; (7) "Implementing the International Dimension: A Welcome Imperative," by Maxwell C. King and Seymour Fersh; and (8) "The Several Strands of a Stunning Harmony," by Myrna Goldenberg. The journal also includes a report on the Community College Humanities Association conference and essay reviews of "Private Lessons," by William Askins and "Teaching Faculty to Teach Critical Thinking," by Robert R. Lawrence. (UCM)

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1987 Number 8

COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES REVIEW

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Robert N. Bellah
Reanimating Tradition

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Some Possibilities for Social Transformation

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Contemplating the Success of American Political Life in a Bicentennial Era

Linda Ching Sledge
The Community College Scholar

Essay Reviews and Reports contributed by *William Askins, Myrna Goldenberg, Maxwell C. King and Seymour Fersh, Robert R. Lawrence,* and *Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear*

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The Community College Humanities Association is a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting the teaching and learning of the humanities in community and two-year colleges.

The Association's purposes are:

- To advance the cause of the humanities in community colleges through its own activities and in cooperation with other institutions and groups involved in higher education;
- To provide a regular forum for the exchange of ideas on significant issues in the humanities in higher education;
- To encourage and support the professional work of teachers in the humanities;
- To sponsor conferences and institutes to provide opportunities for faculty development;
- To promote the discussion of issues of concern to humanists and to disseminate information about the Association's activities through its publications.

The Association's publications include:

- ***The Community College Humanities Review***, a journal for the discussion of substantive issues in the humanistic disciplines and in the humanities in higher education;
- ***The Community College Humanist***, a tri-annual newsletter;
- ***Proceedings of the Community College Humanities Association;***
- **Studies and reports** devoted to practical concerns of the teaching profession.

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Reanimating Tradition

Robert N. Bellah

MY TITLE FOR this talk, "Reanimating Tradition," points to what I like to call its text — a passage from the *Analects* of Confucius. Herbert Fingarette, one of the most interesting commentators on Confucius, has recently referred to the analects as the "conversations" of Confucius, and "conversations" is a term that I think students will understand a little better than the antique word "analects." It also gets at something very important to us as humanists, namely, that conversation is close to the heart of what we are doing. At any rate, the text is, "He who by reanimating the old can gain knowledge of the new is indeed fit to be called a teacher."

That, I think is something that speaks to all of us as teachers, particularly if we have a sense that there are things in the old, in "tradition," that it is part of our responsibility to keep alive and to transmit. Reanimating the old is one of the most important themes in *Habits of the Heart*, a book about tradition. The second chapter deals with the four traditions or sets of traditions that we think are most important in American life and the need to recover certain aspects of those traditions that we feel have become neglected in recent times. Our aim, though, is to do so in a way that is consonant with Confucius's injunction — not to recover the old simply for the sake of the old, but to use the old to help us understand and deal with the new.

That idea is so suspect, however, in a culture so heavily dedicated to novelty and so deeply suspicious of the past that for many of my students the very word "tradition" has a negative meaning. Tradition is what they see themselves as trying to get away from. I sometimes ask them, "Did you think that up for yourself? Didn't you learn right here at Berkeley that tradition is a bad thing? Can't we say there is a tradition of antitraditionalism?"

Robert N. Bellah *is Ford Professor of Sociology and Comparative Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and has chaired the Center of Japanese and Korean Studies there. His books include* The New Religious Consciousness *and* Varieties of Civil Religion. *This article was presented as an address at CCHA's national conference, November 22, 1986, with the support of a grant from the California Council for the Humanities.*

One can also find evidence of this hostility to the very notion of tradition in the responses *Habits of the Heart* elicited when it was published. One commentator, interestingly enough, turns to a book that I am sure many of you know, R. W. B. Lewis's *The American Adam*, and uses Lewis's typology to place us and dismiss us. Lewis, however, drawing on Emerson, speaks of the "party of memory" and the "party of hope," and in the early part of his book speaks about tradition in a way that is very congenial to us, for he sees it as an ongoing conversation. He also points out that Emerson did not see it that way. For Emerson, there was a vast chasm between the party of memory and the party of hope, and all good lay with the latter. The party of memory is simply what holds us back.

Lewis himself finds both parties to be extraordinarily shallow, seeing the party of hope as devoted to an inane optimism and the party of memory as representing a self-pitying nostalgia for a past that probably never was. What our commentator does not realize is that we combine the notion of "community of memory" with that of "community of hope." For us it is the radical chasm or dichotomy between the two that is the problem.

In any case, and this is really our point, memory and hope cannot really be divided by that kind of chasm; to do so would be catastrophic for both. And here we are drawing on another American philosopher, Josiah Royce. Royce's point is that a genuine community of memory is a community of hope and vice versa, and, to put it even more strongly, without memory there is no hope. Furthermore, it is the painful memories, the dangerous memories, that we have to keep in mind if we are to hope in a way that is not inanely optimistic but rooted in something genuine. This is the attitude of what Lewis calls the "party of irony," which seeks to temper the excesses of inane optimism and unrealistic nostalgia. Without either memory or hope, however, the party of irony simply falls into despair or cynicism.

So, again, where our commentator sees a chasm of opposition, I see an ongoing dialogue that reminds us of the things we do not like to think about. It is interesting that while *Habits of the Heart* has been extraordinarily well received and widely adopted on campuses, it has also elicited some very harsh reactions. It is interesting that the negative reviews have come rather evenhandedly from the mobilized Left and the mobilized Right. And their views are almost mirror images of one another. The very first review of the book in the *Wall Street Journal* was, not surprisingly, a hysterically hostile review which said that we hated the people we interviewed and which took the book to be laughing at Americans and their past.

On the other hand, *The Nation*, in a quite hostile review from the point of view of the Left, said that the people in our book are much too "nice," that we

should have shown them up for the fakes and frauds they really are. But what really seems to bother the Left is that lurking in this book is some deep nostalgic wish to return to a past that we are better off without. The critical tone of much of the book is taken as mere tokenism indicating that essentially we do not want to change anything. So this critic falls into that group which condemns us as the party of memory in that one-sided Emersonian sense.

Interestingly enough, the neo-conservatives hate the book as well, and you might wonder why, for it speaks favorably about religion, family, and neighborhood. I think they hate it precisely because, and here I must disagree with my left-wing critics, our evocation of the past is not nostalgic; it has a sharp critical edge and does not lead to the Reagan economic agenda. Therefore, the neo-conservatives hate us more than ever because they see us somehow as on their turf. What is even more interesting, though, is that the neo-conservatives are the priestly protectors of the party of memory in the negative Emersonian sense.

Robert Nisbet, writing in *This World,* attacks us in a furious review for proposing continuous upheaval and the overthrow of all our institutions. From his point of view, if you don't have a stereotyped nostalgic view of the past, then you must want to change things. And, of course, we do want to change things, though not quite as hysterically as he thinks we do.

Even those who are sympathetic with our central effort, that is, to reanimate the old in order to understand and even contribute to the new, have assured me that the older traditions that we point to as having something to say to us in our present time of need, the biblical and civic republican traditions, are so hopelessly eroded, so faintly understood, so perverted and distorted in the service of ideological ends that our task is simply impossible.

We were not sure when we wrote our book whether that kind of criticism was right or wrong. *Habits of the Heart* is, in a deeply American sense, even a John Deweyan sense, experimental. It is an effort to try to see rather than just to deal with the issues in terms of conceptual abstractions. Could we find exemplars of committed, serious moral citizenship trying to do something to make their society a better place? As you know, the second half of the book does show people like that, though it also shows them having a very hard time of it.

Some have accused us of writing a book in abstract sociological language about four traditions that we stand outside of and above. But any reader of the appendix knows that that is not how we conceive of ourselves, and any careful reader sees that we are not doing that. We are not outside the traditions we have described. We participate in them, all of them, including the ones we criticize. The American academy, for example, is one place in our society where ruthless individualistic competition is at its height, as David Riesman once pointed out. When Michael Maccoby's *The Gamesmen* came out, with its typology of

corporate business leaders, one of the types discussed was the jungle fighter, the empire builder who would do anything to enhance his own reputation and power, and Riesman insisted that there were more of those in the university than in the corporation. Like it or not, such ruthless self-aggrandizement is clearly something to be reckoned with in higher education today.

But just as clearly, *Habits of the Heart* stands for the reappropriation of resources in the biblical and civic republican traditions that we think have been pushed to the margins and is an attempt to invoke, encourage, call forth, build, and strengthen precisely those traditions. The book is part of the issues it describes, and what is the most moving to all five of us is that it has been received that way. I can't tell you how many individual letters and comments I have received from people actively engaged in civic groups, in the independent sector, in service organizations, in arts and humanities councils, in labor unions, and in churches and synagogues expressing thanks for a book that helped them better understand the rationale for their commitment.

Just this week, for example, I received a letter from a woman in Washington who has been working for an independent-sector service agency suffering from organizational and funding problems. She had been asking herself why she had chosen such a difficult job and one that paid so little. She wrote to thank us for *Habits*, "because you have shown me why I did what I did and why it is worth doing it and why I intend to keep on with it." That is the kind of response that makes our work worthwhile from our point of view. Sometimes purely academic (in the pejorative sense of that word) discussion that does not come out of the trenches of American life, so to speak, seems a bit beside the point. I am not trying to adopt a populist anti-intellectualism, although that is always a temptation in America. Intellectual endeavor is part of the practice of life, and disconnecting thought from practice in itself can become the source of many of the pathologies of our culture.

Christopher Lasch has recently developed an interesting typology of intellectuals that I think gets at some of the issues that we are concerned with. He speaks of three types of intellectuals and categorizes them in terms of their historic origins. He describes one type as the "voice of conscience," the second as the "voice of reason," and the third as the "voice of imagination." The first, says Lasch, "is institutionalized in the church, which upholds the ideal of a disinterested love of being" against the claims of self-serving, worldly moralities.

But this moral understanding of the intellectual's calling is also found in the humanist tradition. The moral and religious ideal sees the intellectual as an adversary of the rich and powerful. In opposing the claims of wealth and power, however, the moralist is not simply allying himself with the downtrodden and dispossessed. Instead he invokes the counterauthority of tradition, which he

construes not as a body of timeless commandments, unthinkingly and ritualistically obeyed, but as a conversation with the past, an unending reinterpretation of the past in the course of which we not only come to see the past with new eyes but also allow our own ideas and judgments to be changed by the past.

This, I think, is Lasch's version of reanimating the old in order to know the new. He then goes on to say that it is difficult to maintain the traditional role of the voice of conscience because of the tendency to become hardened to the existing structures of power and to justify them instead of challenging them. So the Enlightenment conception of the intellectual as the "voice of reason" unmasking the pretentions of traditional philosophies and religions is firmly rooted in historical reality.

The Enlightenment began the "tradition" of antitraditionalism that saw reason as the antithesis of tradition and set out to replace the appeal to authority with an appeal, not to conscience, not even to logic, but to the new standards of scientific inquiry announced by Descartes, Bacon, and Locke — the notion that the new focus of our life as thinking people would be the scientific method.

This meant among other things a head-on attack on rhetoric, which had been the core of liberal education for nearly 2,000 years. During that time, rhetoric meant a disciplined, thoughtful use of speech in civic discourse to persuade and to be persuaded by one's fellow citizens about issues pertaining to the common good. As humanists today, however, we are the last remnants of that tradition and have been pushed to the margins of an educational system where we were once central because the ruling paradigm today is the paradigm of the Enlightenment, not reason in the classic philosophical sense, but reason in the sense of the scientific method.

Lasch points out that Enlightenment intellectuals can be divided into two groups: the functionaries of the technocratic state (the people who see themselves as providing the intellectual input for an imperial economy in an imperial state which is, of course, what we live in), and another group which see themselves as devoted to the interests of the poor and oppressed here and abroad, but who essentially see themselves as simply working toward putting another group in power and another kind of state structure in command.

The third type I can only allude to. This is the intellectual as alien, rebel, renegade, who refuses to be mobilized by either the existing power structure or its organized opposition and who tries to foster the life of the imagination. Here the artist is the prototype. The alienation from society represented by this type is reminiscent of the Emersonian typology as expanded by Lewis, one in which things that ought to be held together have come apart and become isolated and hostile, to one another.

Lasch's point, and here we are with him, is that it is the intellectual as "voice of conscience" that perhaps is the most in need of revivification and reanimation today. We have been on a long binge of Enlightenment debunking of all tradition — religious, philosophical, humanistic. Its cause was in many respects just, but the end result has been remarkably different from that anticipated with such enormous enthusiasm when the Enlightenment was launched. George Orwell indicates what has gone wrong when he says that for 200 years we sawed and sawed and sawed at the branch we were sitting on, and, in the end, much more suddenly than anyone had foreseen, our efforts were rewarded and down we came. But unfortunately, there had been a little mistake. The thing at the bottom was not a bed of roses after all. It was a cesspool filled with barbed wire — barbed wire in Central America and in South Africa and in Vietnam and in the camps that held the Jews in the Second World War. The twentieth century, the century of enlightenment, has experienced more horrors than all the previous centuries of human history put together. And who can exonerate Enlightenment rationality from responsibility for all that?

What has this to do with us and our task as teachers today, particularly teachers who try, difficult though it is, to get our students to see that those texts which we assign them to read still mean something? Here I must respectfully differ from William Bennett. Though I agree with some of his views on other subjects, his view of the humanities has been referred to, quite rightly, as "great-books fundamentalism," which seeks somehow to embalm the past in a lifeless way that certainly does not involve any criticism of the present. It does not reanimate the past or help us deal with the world in which we live.

Bennett's view assumes among other things that there is some absolutely fixed canon. I agree that there are works that everyone should have read, but a living canon is something that changes over time. We decide, for example, that a work that has been part of the canon for a long time can be left out, and that something quite recent belongs there. Determining what comprises the canon is an ongoing process, not a rigid adherence to what some authority hands down from on high as a fixed and unchangeable list of works. Our task, I think, is to recover, to reanimate, and to apply the great notion that Hans-Georg Gadamer has given us about the task of interpretation, to use that fancy word "hermeneutics." Real interpretation always involves the element of application in an integral way — taking into account the relationship of the text to our circumstances. This means that the text is not given as something universal, but as something that we have to deal with, that calls us in to question, that makes us doubt our assumptions. From our position, likewise, we may also doubt the text and ask questions of it. As interpreters, we seek to understand the text, to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes its meaning and importance. But in order to understand that, we cannot disregard ourselves and

our situation. In other words, the notion that we can understand the text as though we were disembodied intellects is false.

Here I would like to share with you an example of reanimating the old to help us deal with the new that comes from biblical scholarship. And remember that biblical scholarship is one of the most highly conscious interpretive traditions in Judeo-Christian culture, one that seeks to understand texts not only in terms of all the nuanced contexts in which they were written but also to determine what they mean to us. I call to your attention as an example of this hermeneutics of recovery, of the task of dealing with the old in relation to the new, a book edited by Elisabeth Fiorenza called *In Memory of Her*, an example of the highest level of serious New Testament scholarship from the point of view of a feminist experience of life today. Part of what she has done is to make us see texts that we did not see before, and perhaps one of the most stunning examples is the very text which she uses for the title of her book, from the fourteenth chapter of Mark:

> It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth, and kill him; for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people." And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor." [Some incipient Presbyterians were clearly already there.] And they reproached her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

But who is she? That is the stunning point that Fiorenza makes. Our dear, masculine Mark has neglected to tell us one thing — her name. There are many women in the New Testament. Some of them are named, thank God, but this one has done something that will be told in memory of her "wherever the gospel is preached." The only other such event in the whole New Testament, one that speaks of a "memory" that must continue to be told, is the Last Supper. And we do not know the woman's name? I think that Fiorenza is making a powerful point about *now*, not just about this text, when she calls this to mind.

Fiorenza's discussion of a passage from Matthew 15 provides another instructive example of what a hermeneutic approach can accomplish when it joins memory and hope instead of dividing them. "And Jesus went away from there," it begins, "and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon":

> And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

These two examples from Fiorenza's book show the power of a way of reading that considers our position in relation to the past. I am sure that none of you will ever look at those passages again in quite the same way, because she has made them live for us. She has also used them to call into question aspects of our own life that we take for granted, and that, I think, is the highest form of humanistic scholarship.

I want to end these remarks with some words that Helen Vendler spoke in her presidential address at the MLA in 1980. She began her address by quoting from Wordsworth's "The Prelude": "what we have loved, / Others will love, and we will teach them how." That is a central text for anyone who is concerned with teaching the things that we have loved and helping our students to learn to love them as well.

Our students come to us, as Vendler says, having read no works of literature in foreign languages and scarcely any works of literature in their own language. The years between twelve and eighteen, when they might be reading rapidly, uncritically, widely, happily, and thoughtlessly, are somehow dissipated without cumulative force. Those who end their educations with secondary school have been cheated altogether of their literary inheritance from the Bible to Robert Lowell. It is no wonder they do not love what we love; we as a culture have not taught them to.

With a reformed curriculum beginning in preschool, all children would know about the Prodigal Son and the Minotaur. They would know the stories presumed by our literature as children reading Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare* or Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* once knew them. We can surely tell them the tales before they can read Shakespeare. There are literary forms appropriate to every age, even the youngest. Nothing is more lonely than to go through life unaccompanied by a sense that others have had similar experiences and have left a record of them.

Every adult needs to be familiar with Job or Orpheus or Circe or Ruth or Lear or Jesus or the golden calf or the Holy Grail or Antigone in order to refer private experience to some identifying frame of reference. By emphasizing the great tales of our inherited culture, I do not mean to minimize the local and the

ethnic. Literary imagination is incurably local, but it is against the indispensable background of the general literary culture that native authors assert their local imaginations.

Our schools cannot afford to neglect either resource. It is not within our power to reform the primary and secondary schools, but we do have it within our power, I believe, to reform ourselves and to make it our own first task to provide, especially for our beginning students, that rich web of associations lodged in the tales of majority and minority cultural life by which they could begin to understand themselves as individuals and as social beings. We must give them not only literature suited to their level of reading, but also works that give an indisputably literary embodiment to the central myths of our culture.

All freshman English courses, to my mind, should devote at least half their time to reading myth, legend, and parable; beginning language courses should do the same. We owe it to ourselves to teach what we love on our first decisive encounter with our students. Otherwise, we misrepresent ourselves and we deprive our students. Too often they go away disheartened by our implicit or explicit criticism of their speech and writing in English or in a foreign language, and we go away disheartened by our conviction that we have not engaged their hearts or their minds. And the public, instead of remembering how often in later life they have thought of the parable of the talents, or the loss of Eurydice, or the sacrifice of Isaac, or the patience of Penelope, or the fox in the grapes, or the minister's black veil, remembers the humiliations of freshman English or the long-lost drills in language laboratories.

One of our problems is that we collaborate with a definition of the humanities as one more skill or technique to use to get ahead on the job. We lose the content that makes it worth transmitting anything at all when we become no more than a minor, marginal adjunct of the scientific method. We owe it to ourselves, Vender says finally, to show our students when they first meet us what we are. We owe their dormant appetites, thwarted for so long in their previous schooling, that deep sustenance that will make them realize that they, too, having been taught, can love what we love.

The Humanities and the "New Student": Some Possibilities for Social Transformation

L. Steven Zwerling

THE ISSUES ARE stark. The role of education in America is once again undergoing re-examination. This time, officials with substantial power to write and rewrite public policy are questioning the effectiveness of public education. All interventions of the past five decades — from open access to bilingualism to preschool efforts to student aid — are under scrutiny, some would claim under threat.

Perhaps the most dramatic and fundamental example of this trend is the current excellence debate. Critics challenge educators, appropriately, to look at their curricula (they are in "disarray," it is claimed), their general education offerings (they are virtually nonexistent, it is claimed), at the communication and computational skills of students (in decline, it is claimed).

Less often in this debate does one hear voices calling out about issues of equity. Harvard's core curriculum may have undergone reasonably successful revision, but what about predominately black Lawson Community College's curriculum? The occupational chances may be bright for computer science graduates of the California Institute of Technology, but what are the chances for young people and adults without complete secondary or postsecondary educations?

In earlier decades, those without adequate formal education could find employment in manufacturing, in public works — road building, electrification projects, subway construction. With their muscles and effort, people could provide for themselves and their families — especially for their children — by encouraging and enabling them to go to and stay in school.

Today there are few such jobs. The relatively few blue-collar jobs still existing are often open only to guild or union members. Even entry-level

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L. Steven Zwerling *is associate dean at New York University's Division of Degree Studies and Skills Development. He is the author of* Second Best: The Crisis of the Community College *and the editor of* The Community College and Its Critics. *This paper was originally presented as the Keynote Address at CCHA's national conference, November 20, 1986, with the support of a grant from the California Council for the Humanities.*

positions in today's service economy require the skills one acquires through schooling — communications and analytical skills, keyboard competency, customer relations skills. Access to better jobs, to careers, requires higher-level competencies acquired only through more extensive schooling — computer skills, critical and analytical thinking, a quantitative and technical orientation, interpersonal capacities. Thus we must pay special attention to the destiny of minorities and those of low socio-economic status who traditionally get less than an equal share of schooling, especially a less than equal share of the kind of schooling now required for upward mobility in our society.

Access is under attack and this certainly needs to be resisted for its own sake. But access in this context is not enough. Excellence is a legitimate issue as well. To gain the skills needed for a chance to be occupationally and personally mobile, both the kind and quality of education counts as much as access to education. The challenge today is how to synthesize access and excellence and thereby provide access to the right kinds of high-quality schooling.

It may not be overly dramatic to say that the success of our democracy may very well rest on how we confront these issues. A failure to do so will doom literally millions of people to live their entire lives outside the mainstream of the economy.

Now how does this relate to my subject? More specifically, how can community colleges, through their humanities offerings, play a democratizing role in higher education? In brief, here is an overview of my position: Traditionally, an immersion in the humanities has been available to the children of the elite at selective colleges and universities. The lower classes, if they studied at all, studied vocational subjects. At most they took a course or two in the liberal arts. Further, though a liberal education has usually been defined by what it is not — not specialized, not vocational, not occupational — it ironically turns out to be of more practical value than vocational studies. Though the children of affluence begin with many advantages, a liberal education is a "value-added" education even for them. The current opportunity structure is such that the competencies best engendered by the humanities are the ones required for entry-level positions as well as ultimate career success.

Thus, if the new student clienteles who begin their higher education at community colleges are to receive both a liberating and practical education, the humanities must articulate an even more ambitious agenda than currently contemplated, as it is only through liberal studies that students can acquire the skills they need to have a realistic chance to begin and then develop careers.

There is also a further agenda for the humanities at community colleges. In addition to this very practical, even politically attractive role, there are more traditional, more intrinsic opportunities for those of us who care about the

humanities. The bottom line here, then, is that the humanities at the two-year college can be very compatible with current bottom-line higher educational realities as well as play a comprehensive role in the lives of *all* students in this most comprehensive of institutions.

The Context

TODAY'S COMMUNITY college barely resembles the junior college of earlier generations. Its mission has expanded; in many ways it has become a new institution. A test of this is the fact that familiar definitions no longer apply. We can no longer separate the traditional functions of the community college as neatly as in the past — into collegiate, career, compensatory, and community divisions. How does one classify an adult who works full time and attends intermittently, initially taking skills courses and then credit courses in business, getting an A.A.S. degree in computer technology, and eventually transferring to a four-year college? In effect this student fits into all four categories.

How many students take two years to complete work in the "two-year college"? How many "transfer students" actually transfer? How many "terminal students" terminate? Why is it that more than half the students who transfer are from among the college's "terminal students"? Why are there now more "reverse transfers" than "forward transfers"? Clearly the junior college that came into being with an exclusively "college-parallel" curriculum has been transformed.

See if developments of the last decade seem familiar.[1] During the past ten years your college defined its mission as "something for everyone," and in some ways it has become as much a community *center* as a community *college*. Courses in how to make Jell-O molds coexist with others in English literature.

Who should pay for noncredit remedial and continuing education courses has become more of an issue as the source of funding has shifted from the local district to the state legislature. In most states the legislature refuses to support noncredit offerings. Thus, community colleges have devised strategies to convert as many noncredit courses as possible to credit. The need to offer more remedial courses has also required some adjustments — to keep developmental courses small in size, other courses have felt administrative pressure to increase their enrollments. As more and more students require financial aid, academic contortions are necessary to design twelve-credit schedules that do not overtax the ability of underprepared students. Giving credit for high-school-level courses, for example, is not uncommon in the struggle to keep students eligible.

To expand enrollments, beyond accepting all who show up for registration, community colleges have become aggressive in their recruiting — even setting up information and registration booths in shopping malls. This "marketing

approach" has attracted a diverse student clientele. More students are interested in individual courses than in integrated programs of study. Some step in and out. Others enroll only once and are never heard from again.

Above all, the institution is obsessed by the numbers. The number of FTEs determines the college's fiscal fate. A new formulation, "seat time" — course credit enrollments on a single day during the semester — is another measure of success (or failure). And administrative careers are made (or broken) as the FTEs and times-in-seat are tallied. "Bottom-line-think" also has led colleges to depend more and more on less expensive adjunct faculty — now more than half the sections offered are taught by part-timers.

Staff have come to expect students not to complete courses, much less full programs of study. In many urban two-year colleges, fewer than 5 percent of the students who say they aspire to a degree complete that degree. Rarely are advanced-level courses offered. When they are, they are frequently canceled due to low enrollments. The fact that students may require them for graduation does not always persuade the administration that it is important to offer them.

This emphasis on single courses and the diversity of the student body has contributed to the deterioration of coherent curricula — especially the institution's general education offerings. In the absence of well-conceived curricula, many colleges have taken the opportunity to cut their budgets by dis-investing in counseling and academic advising. Why provide advisement when so many students ("enrollees") sign up for individual courses in shopping centers? This has led to a disheartened faculty. They have come to feel powerless. Their traditional role as shapers of the curriculum is now largely irrelevant. Their traditional role as guardians of tradition is unappreciated. Many, protected by the sinecure of tenure, now teach and run, feeling disaffiliated from the institution and its goals.

As distressing as this may be, there is still more to say that further darkens the picture. There are also significant, less well-explored, regressive social consequences that are the product of the newly shaped community college. Since the early 1970s, a few of us who have written critically about the community college movement have claimed that, in spite of its democratic rhetoric, the two-year college has not contributed to the social progress of its students. Quite the opposite. Accumulated data reveal that the very fact of attending a community college is a liability to students' academic and vocational progress when their rates of achievement are compared with academically and socio-economically equivalent students who begin their studies at a four-year college.[2] There is also growing evidence that the community college's much-vaunted vocational curricula do not do an effective job even in preparing graduates for entry-level positions, much less for later career advancement.[3]

Some of us see these institutional "failures" as an intended part of the two-year college's historical mission. Until recent years, when four-year colleges were concerned about there being too many students for them to absorb, community colleges were called upon to "divert" as many students as possible away from senior institutions. This was in part accomplished through something Burton Clark called "cooling out" — a process whereby the staff of the two-year college (especially the counseling staff) acted in concert to get as many students as possible to lower their aspirations, to move out of transfer into terminal programs, thereby deflecting students away from four-year colleges.[4]

Intended or not, this evidence of institutional ineffectiveness is even more disturbing when one realizes that community colleges are increasingly *the* college for the disenfranchised. In earlier more progressive years, many four-year colleges made a significant effort to recruit, support, and retain minority students, returning women, the underemployed, and students with as yet untapped potential. But as we all know too well, the numbers now tell us that this commitment is largely over. When one then looks within community colleges at the distribution, for example, of white and black students among courses and programs, one finds a disturbing kind of academic tracking with blacks underrepresented in the higher-status career programs. The same holds true when comparing the distribution of more- and less-affluent students. Thus, in these various ways, community colleges appear to play a role in the inter-generational reproduction of the social structure — contributing to the maintenance of current inequities rather than to their amelioration, despite all the rhetoric to the contrary.

But there is something further, something ironically democratic about the community college and how it negatively affects all students through the general, pervasive decline in the culture of literacy. As several recent works that apply the methods of anthropology to the study of the culture of the community college have noted, a climate of expectations exists among students and staff that works against an emphasis on higher-order cognitive skills and processes. Rather then expecting and requiring students to be critical, analytical, synthetic, and original in their thinking and communicating, faculty frequently promote passive forms of learning that emphasize an exchange of prepackaged bits of factual information and the procedures of reading and writing.[5]

Lest one is too quick to place all the blame on the faculty for this decline in critical literacy, these observers also point out that students are also not interested in higher learning. Most characteristically they seek only to satisfy the *requirements* of courses and programs. Thus, it is claimed, students and faculty "conspire" together to "level down" or "remedialize" the academic agenda for the institution.

There are of course ironies within ironies in all of this. Students who come with a practical orientation, seeking schooling for career-related purposes and interested only in meeting course requirements, wind up with a fundamentally impractical education (good perhaps at best for short-term results) that excludes those higher-order competencies that many agree are essential to career flexibility and mobility. And the faculty who, through their disciplines and teaching, want to participate in higher education (not just in community service) wind up feeling powerless and demoralized. In this *pas de deux* everyone loses.

Some Possibilities for Social Transformation

IF WHAT I have described above has the ring of familiarity, what role can the humanities play in the retransformation of the contemporary community college? Actually, I would prefer to phrase the question somewhat differently: What role *must* the humanities play so that students can experience education as more than simply memorization and recitation? What role *must* the humanities assume to draw students into the culture of higher learning and to develop those critical literacy skills that are necessary for personal and professional liberation?

What we need is an agenda for leveling-up institutional expectations. Even the career-program faculty know that their students are doomed to dead-end jobs if they cannot read, write, and think critically about their work. This is not just a call for higher standards, which in fact is usually more a euphemism for excluding the underprepared and cooling-out those deemed inappropriately ambitious. My call rather is for an inclusive form of education, centered on liberal studies, for all the "new" students for whom the two-year college is the most available, most realistic option.

There have of course been recent attempts to restore the humanities to the two-year college. In some states, the legislatures have tied continued funding to the imposition of liberal arts requirements. There is the growth of such organizations as the Community College Humanities Association, and there are a number of noteworthy efforts at individual colleges around the country. Too few to be sure, but important to know about — at Miami-Dade, at the Community College of Philadelphia, and Los Medanos, for example. Unfortunately, however, there are also a number of trends in the humanities that at first appear to be progressive but upon closer examination contribute to more segregation and inequality.

The first of these trends attempts to enrich the humanities experience for students in career programs. On many campuses, faculties are reluctant to institute requirements, knowing that many students will avoid them by taking only career-related courses and then leave college for a job without completing their degrees. The alternative, then, to bringing students to humanities courses

is to bring the humanities to students in occupational programs. At the State University of New York, they call this the "infusion approach." Via this approach, one finds "humanities modules" — two- to three-week segments inserted into vocational programs: Spanish for medical assistant students, French for restaurant management students, the "Role of the Automobile in American Society" for auto mechanic students, et cetera.[6] These kinds of modular sections offer the patina of higher learning while obviously avoiding the challenges and rewards of its substance.

A second regressive approach to the "revival" of the humanities adds to the kind of tracking within community colleges mentioned earlier. In recent years, many liberal arts faculties have developed proposals for honors programs as a way to attract and retain higher-ability students. A number of California community colleges, for example, have teamed up with neighboring university centers to launch "redirection programs" — honors programs set in the two-year colleges to attract university applicants who are thereby redirected to the junior college as part of an effort to control enrollment growth in four-year institutions. These proposals for honors programs usually include a reallocation of resources away from the broader student body toward these new preferred students — in effect a kind of redirection of resources and concern within the junior colleges from the less-able to the more-able students. Sadly, these proposals usually do not include ways to discover and develop the hidden potential of the colleges' traditional student body so that they too might benefit from these enriched programs. More typically, in fact, one finds a growing percentage of the traditional student body confined to "terminal general education" and remedial programs — both largely staffed by the humanities faculty not invited to teach in the emerging honors programs. These terminal general education programs first appeared in the 1930s and were designed for students who would never go on to become juniors or seniors at four-year colleges. Though out of favor during the more egalitarian-minded 1960s and 1970s, they are now in a state of revival at many community colleges. Ironically, vocational programs used to serve as the lowest track within the junior college, with the liberal arts transfer track the most selective. Today the reverse is true, with the liberal arts program more and more the place to "hold" students waiting for places to open in the more prestigious career programs. Some would claim that the general education program is often now a new kind of remedial ghetto where cooling-out in its classic form takes place — but this time with a new twist as students are cooled-out of their "unrealistic" vocational (rather than academic) ambitions into an ersatz form of the liberal arts.

A more progressive, inclusive agenda for the humanities would take on very different kinds of configurations. In that spirit, what I propose are multiple forms of humanistic study, each set in curricular structures that are appropriate in

different ways for different kinds of "new" students commonly served by the two-year college — full-time, traditional-age students enrolled in either career or transfer programs; young-adult part-time students who return to school to seek degrees and/or enhance their career chances; older adults who enroll periodically, taking courses for recreational or more profoundly intrinsic reasons.

Many traditional-age students begin their undergraduate studies already rather well cooled-out by previous school experiences. Often they have participated in remedial programs. Often they have already been deemed "sparrows" rather than "bluebirds" and have come to see themselves as "destined" for failure or at best marginal forms of academic and vocational achievement. But if we believe that human potential is at least reasonably equally distributed among all peoples, then many of our sparrows are potentially bluebirds.

For these students the humanities can play a decisive role in their awakening and development. To play a progressive role, curricular structures themselves have to be progressively ordered — it is minimally essential that community colleges commit themselves to offer *and* run sequential offerings through at least the intermediate level. This is an important institutional symbol of belief in students' potential — it shifts the focus from individual courses to courses of study.

With curricular sequences in place, through both the content and methods of their disciplines, humanists can more consciously make a commitment to a kind of student involvement that encourages personal transformation. I am attracted to Jack Mezirow's notion of "perspective transformation," a process that leads students to see how they may be trapped in their own histories and may, without a major effort, be destined to relive that history.[7] Carefully considered forms of teaching can help students become critically aware of the cultural and psychological assumptions that have patterned their lives. In this way their perspectives can be transformed and other possibilities for their lives can manifest themselves.

Another useful approach to what might be called "reconstructive teaching" is Zelda Gamson's elaboration of "liberating education."[8] To be liberating, an education must be rooted in experience. An education that is grounded in students' experiences both validates those experiences and enables students to establish linkages between what they already know and what they need to learn. For the disciplines to avoid being merely academic, thereby driving away students, they must "reach down into their [own] struggles with *life* and show students how these struggles can illuminate what they experience themselves."[9]

This approach does not, however, focus primarily on the self — it moves quickly beyond the self to what others in other times and places have

experienced and to modes of analysis and understanding. A liberating curriculum, carried out with methodologies designed and committed to students' transformation, "moves back and forth between awareness and application, engagement and detachment."[10] It is an education that seeks to heat-up rather than cool-out. It is also an approach, frankly, that heats-up and transforms the faculty. And it is an education ideally suited to working with traditional-age community college students who respond immediately to its personal force and its transformational power.

For a second group of community college students, young adults who attend part time and seek either degrees or clusters of courses primarily for career-related purposes, the humanities have, in my view, a different role to play. These students often have had some previous college experience; indeed, many "reverse transfer" students already have undergraduate degrees and enroll in two-year colleges for a particular form of specialized education. Most work full time. Many have moved from job to job, seeking more. Some have already come to sense that their education lacks the breadth they now see to be important to their careers and to leading fulfilled lives. To be sure, at this stage in their lives, career interests are still central, but as they attempt to negotiate their way into management positions, they are discovering that those who are most upwardly mobile, who advance the fastest, have *something* in their academic background that is missing in their own. They are ripe, therefore, for an experience in the liberal arts that does at least one of two things — first, either provides a curricular stream that helps them acquire those generic skills that have direct professional application, or, second, provides a curriculum that enables them to fill in the gaps in their educational background. The first is process rich; the second is rich in content.

The fullest expression of the former, the generic-skills or competencies approach, has been the attempt to foster writing across the curriculum. There is a great deal that is attractive about the idea of giving as much emphasis to competency as content — especially when working with career-minded adults. But in the traditional approach to a competency-based education, the competencies themselves that undergird the curriculum often seem too abstract and alienating to students with a practical orientation. The traditional list includes the competencies of "abstract logical thinking," "critical analysis," "historical consciousness," "values," "understanding numerical data," and "international and multicultural experiences."[11]

A more attractive approach, and one with equivalent integrity, would emphasize a broader range of competencies that are essential to a person's being successful in life — in careers, as citizens, as members of a family. I would organize these in three clusters — *intellectual and cognitive skills* (logical, critical, analytical thinking; communications: verbal, written, and nonverbal;

information and data acquisition, manipulation, and retrieval; multidimensional thinking; values formation; etc.), *interpersonal and political skills* (decision-making; advocacy and persuasion; subordination, management, and leadership; networking; "getting-along" skills, etc.), *personal and affective skills* (risk-taking and moxie; flexibility and adaptability; the ability to handle ambiguity, uncertainty, and crisis; human understanding; spontaneity, playfulness, and creativity; self-motivation; self-evaluation, correction, and control; passion and commitment, etc.)

Assuming that my list of the competencies for success at least gets us started, one then needs to ask which of these are appropriately taught? And which of these are the rightful preserve of the humanities? "Most" is my answer to both questions.

This approach in both credit and noncredit programs, for both adult students seeking degrees and others, serves a progressive, reconstructive agenda and also goes beyond the usual goal of the "basics movement." This list of competencies, laced into liberal studies courses and programs, lifts the usually limited basics approach from something instrumental to something transformational as it gets us all thinking about what makes people powerful and points to ways we can teach this to our students.

For those younger, practical-minded adults who wish a content-rich curriculum to fill in gaps in their educational backgrounds, there are also challenges to the humanities faculty. When discussing curricular issues here it is useful to be realistic and acknowledge that these students are not necessarily seeking degrees (quite a few have them already) and that most will enroll intermittently. The usual curricular response is really no response at all — give students the schedule of what is available in any given semester and let them take anything they want. To be fair, no matter what approach is taken, this haphazard pattern may still turn out to be the dominant reality. But there are opportunities for educators to provide alternatives.

Humanities programs for intermittent students can consist of related groups of courses that stand alone. These clusters do not necessarily have to be connected to degree programs. They need only be connected to each other in meaningful ways over a number of semesters — in chronological groupings, around themes, about problems. They can be organized in more or less traditional academic configurations, in interdisciplinary arrangements, or by genre. None of these forms is mutually exclusive. Successful programs can be structured according to more than one organizational principle. For example, the theme of "culture" can be approached chronologically through a series of interdisciplinary courses and seminars.

Adults often prefer a problem-centered curriculum in which academic content is framed by issues that are vital to their lives. It is not difficult to shape a series of interdisciplinary humanities courses that over a year or two would trace the human endeavor to consider such issues. History, philosophy, literature, and psychology, for example, compatably lend their methods and discoveries to this kind of structure.

The problem-centered approach is also the most progressive as the issues emerge from the experiences of the students themselves. Adults, we all acknowledge, are different from traditional-age students because of the richness and diversity of their lives. If we can find compelling ways to draw upon that experience in curricular forms carried out in discussion-rich classes, these students at community colleges will have an opportunity to discover ways to take more control of their lives.

Malcolm Knowles calls this "andragogy." It is based on the assumptions that adults are self-directing (or at least will become so quickly in the proper learning environment); that adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something; that adults enter an educational activity with a life-centered, task-centered, or problem-centered orientation to learning; that adults are more intrinsically motivated than younger students.[12] These characteristics of adult students make them ideally suited to an approach to the humanities that seeks to encourage personal transformation.

The third kind of student one typically encounters at community colleges is the older adult who takes courses for purely personal reasons — for recreation, to be with people, to find meaning. Few pursue degrees. Many actually have degrees but seek to re-experience the liberal arts now that they are "old enough" to appreciate them. In a sense they seek a liberal re-education. They seek to make more sense of the world, to find a framework within which to understand human history, to confront the big questions about the meaning of life. They are at a stage in their lives when it is important to find ways to integrate their own personal histories: In short, they are the kind of students humanists dream about encountering.

But too often, what we offer them trivializes our mutual aspirations, and, appropriately, the recreational courses we offer these adults are mocked by other educators and not funded by state legislatures. If among these students there are some seeking an integrated experience, we should respond with more than courses in social dancing and knitting. Why not a four-course sequence in Western civilization — "The Classical World," "The Middle Ages and the Renaissance," "The Making of the Modern World," and "Modern Times"?

Some would respond that such courses would never get off the ground — no one would enroll — even though we would love to teach them. That

response presupposes a passive institutional role. If there are adults who are motivated as I have suggested, then we need to develop the appropriate programs and make them known.

Up to this point, most institutional marketing has been general — the institution itself is what we market. Only the most sophisticated colleges "segment" their potential student markets and then market directly to each of them. What I am suggesting has its bottom-line side (more enrollments), but it also takes into consideration that the humanities, in their various forms, are the most powerful, most important kind of higher learning — and thus marketable. They are vital to people at all stages in their lives. They can help people transform their lives because they are the most practical and most transporting form of learning. That is what we should communicate. That is what we *must* "sell" to people.

I am frankly tired of hearing all the moaning and groaning about the decline of the humanities and feeling the sense of powerlessness so many humanists express in the face of the "triumph" of career education. Let's get off our you-know-whats and assert what we know: Only the humanities can change people's lives.

Notes

[1] In the following description of the contemporary community college, I am indebted to Richard C. Richardson, Jr., and Associates, *Literacy in the Open Access College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983), pp. 148 ff.

[2] See, for example, Jerome Karabel, "Community Colleges and Social Stratification," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 42 (1972), pp. 521–61; and L. Steven Zwerling, *Second Best: The Crisis of the Community College* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

[3] For example, see Fred L. Pincus, "Vocational Education: More False Promises," *The Community College and Its Critics*, ed. L. S. Zwerling (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), pp. 41–52; and W. W. Wilmes, *Vocational Education and Social Mobility* (Los Angeles: UCLA Graduate School of Education, 1980).

[4] Burton Clark, "The 'Cooling-Out' Function in Higher Education," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 65 (1960), pp. 569–76.

[5] See, for example, Howard London, *The Culture of a Community College* (New York: Praeger, 1978); and Richardson and Associates, *Literacy*.

[6] *The Humanities and Sciences in Two-Year Colleges* (Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 1980), pp. 3–4.

[7] Jack Mezirow, "Perspective Transformation," *Adult Education*, vol. 28 (1978), pp. 100–10.

[8] Zelda Gamson, *Liberating Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984).

[9] G. A Woditsch, *Developing Generic Skills: A Model for Competency-Based Education*, CUE Project Occasional Paper Series, no. 3 (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University, 1977), p. 25.

[10] Gamson, *Liberating Education*.

[11] *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges, 1985).

[12] Malcolm Knowles, *Andragogy in Action* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984).

COMMENTARY

Commentaries on Steven Zwerling's "The New Student"

Three speakers, with the support of a grant from the California Council for the Humanities, were invited to comment on Dean Zwerling's Keynote Address, and edited versions of their comments are given below. The respondents are: **Constance Carroll,** *president of Saddleback College (CA);* **Joshua Smith,** *chancellor of California Community Colleges; and* **Clifford Peterson,** *president of Quinsigamond College (MA) and co-chair of the Shared Vision joint task force formed by NCOE and CCHA.* — Ed.

Constance Carroll:

IT IS ALWAYS a pleasure to consider the thoughtful work of Steven Zwerling, although in this instance I find myself both in agreement and disagreement with what he has said. Our situation is not as bleak as the first half of Dean Zwerling's paper suggests, nor do I think it is necessary for us to reinvent the wheel of general education. The issues that face us today are not new. If one reads the literature of the early and mid-1800s, when Congress provided land grants for a new kind of university, one will find almost identical challenges being raised and criticisms being leveled. The fact that universities would be practical and open to the average man and that their curriculum would largely be related to practical pursuits were quite controversial issues at the time, although it was easier for land-grant institutions to resolve the conflict between open access and excellence because they were able to exercise selectivity in admissions.

What makes the community college a more difficult environment is the absence of selectivity in admissions (although tuition increases and certain types of assessment instruments can be used to serve the same purpose), especially now, when the community college student body has become intensely diverse. This is why many community colleges are still unclear as to what role they should play in education: Are they truly institutions of higher learning, or are they simply institutions of postsecondary education? The answer varies from community college to community college, which makes it very difficult to generalize.

Let me digress here to mention one of the most important facts about the state of California — and that fact is that thirteen years from now, in the year 2000, California will be the first state in the Union in which the majority of the population will be composed of ethnic minorities who will receive their educations at community colleges. As has been observed by Joshua Smith, at the same time, the electorate is carrying out a different agenda and needs to be educated in the direction of supporting community colleges. The ultimate irony of this state, of course, is the passage of a bill like Proposition 63 at a time when the diversity of the population is increasing.

The community college challenge, then, goes beyond the challenge of the new student. It is the challenge inherent in the open-access institution itself. And my conclusion, after having studied community colleges at the national level and from my work in the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, is that the community colleges that succeed are those that are the best supported and the most practical in the implementation of their curriculum. That means multiple tracks to address the varying degrees of competence and mastery of subject matter that exist among our students. Since the student body is diverse, the approach to educating them must be equally diverse, offering programs that range from remediation to honors. I think that is a practical approach and is what I mean by not reinventing the wheel of general education.

I think that Dean Zwerling is absolutely correct in his articulation of other problems faced by the community college. His description of a disempowered faculty was particularly distressing to me, and I agree that educational decisions are driven by administrators in search of numbers because that is the incentive system in many states (though not all). His analysis of the political realities is also accurate. Congress is the largest school board in the world, and its favorite fodder is community colleges. I doubt that four-year institutions would allow to happen to them what has happened to the community colleges in terms of almost inviting an unhealthy and certainly uninformed level of scrutiny on the part of state and local officials into the academic affairs of their institutions.

All of this leads naturally, then, to two unhappy results: a pandering to the whims of students and a new emphasis — some would call it a religion — on such activities as marketing, which is an unfortunate term, although an accurate one. The corrections, in my view, are a little different from those recommended by the speaker. First of all, the ultimate correction, and I feel this very strongly, is simply the re-empowerment of the faculty of community colleges. By re-empowerment I mean reinstituting faculty dominance — not partnership but faculty dominance — in all aspects of decision-making affecting the curriculum within a community college. I am very proud that at Saddleback College the entire curriculum process is a function of the academic senate and that all curriculum committees are chaired by faculty members supported by an

institutional commitment through reassigned time. The institution works very well for a simple reason: the determination of general education — what students must have in common before attaining an associate in arts or an associate in science degree — is the purview of a college faculty.

Second, in all of our discussions we need to concentrate on the question of subject matter. An abstract term like "excellence" means nothing in isolation, and to make the idea more concrete we need to consider the academic content of the general-education and humanities curricula that would be required of students — not the process, not pedagogy, not marketing, not methodology, but what precisely it is that faculties believe students should learn.

Let me elaborate a bit and then conclude. Dean Zwerling calls for a new emphasis on sequential instruction for traditional-age students — the "sparrows," as they have come to be called. I applaud a return to sequential education, which suggests, again, the re-establishment of requirements. But what requirements? Should there be a required sequence in logic and ethics, and what should the problems included be, and should they be the same for all logic courses? Should there be music requirements, art appreciation requirements, a separate history requirement? Should foreign language be a requirement? (Foreign languages are now referred to in California as "alien tongues," which I find interesting.) To define this is, I think, our real challenge, including deciding what needs to be done given the increasing diversity of our student body. Part of the solution is the development of a canon of literature that is culturally diverse, not just reflective of the Western, Anglo-Saxon culture. But I think that the real challenge to our community college faculties is this: to recommend to state boards, legislators, et cetera, what subject matter should be required of all students at all levels in the community college, and, particularly, to make that subject matter as diverse as the student population itself.

In summary, then, we need to be politically active on two fronts. First, we need to work extremely hard to remove the enrollment-chasing incentives that are imposed upon our institutions with funding systems that reward quantity in production rather than quality. Second, we need to work to ensure that the faculty is restored to its former role as arbiter of the curriculum. In California local academic senates are mandated by statute with legislative prerogatives. And if that is what it takes to ensure that across the nation the role of the faculty will be restored to its proper prominence, then that is an activity that should be undertaken.

These are difficult and complex times. Community colleges can indeed make a very real difference in our democratic society, in the humanities in particular. Our approach, however, will have to be solidly grounded in subject

matter and requirement structures if we are to assume full partnership in the higher education community. I see things quite optimistically because I see the faculties themselves calling for a return to what we already know and need not reinvent. And I think that, if we marshall our energies in this direction, then we will become a respected part of the higher education community, and we will be able to spend our time at conferences talking about the future of education in totally optimistic and positive terms.

Joshua Smith:

MY CHARGE TODAY is to comment on Dean Zwerling's address. Let me say at the outset that his commitment to the humanities and his sensitive understanding of how they are pursued in the community college milieu cannot be questioned. The menu he has provided for bringing the humanities to life among our students is rich indeed, and I find particularly compelling his arguments that the humanities can have an appeal not only to students in general, but to particular groups of them.

Some of the things he said are depressing. I can offer an example of a similarly depressing remark made recently in another state. During a hearing on the future and vitality of community colleges in that state, one person gave an extraordinarily articulate presentation. At the end he spoiled it by saying, "Yes, the humanities are good for all of our students, even for our minority students." *Even* for our minority students! His attitude is one that Dean Zwerling has just discussed. I use it only as an illustration to support Zwerling's point that there are still some who hold such attitudes.

Dean Zwerling made many points with which I agree. He reminded me of the days I spent as a community college president a short distance from his own university, bemoaning the fact that the liberal arts students did not perform as well as the career students and that places like Zwerling's institution would steal our students before they graduated. In an attempt to find out why students in good standing would leave before receiving degrees, we found that much of what Zwerling said was true — a shortage of upper division courses, the milieu that was created by having so much remediation (as much as 90 percent), the downgrading of expectations by counsellors.

I took a risk, a very important risk in a place with an enrollment-driven formula. I said that if only six, or seven, or eight students enrolled in a course in Shakespeare, we would run it. If there was a need for a course in calculus or history or creative writing or foreign languages and we had twenty students enrolled, the course would run. And they did. The retention rate went up, and

more of our students graduated. I then saw N.Y.U. differently because it offered a very, very warm welcome to the community college transfer student, whether a liberal arts or a career student. And I looked forward to sending them there.

The experience of these community college students was very different from my own, which reflects an older tradition of education in America. I was fortunate enough to receive my early education in the Boston public school system, which then employed primarily talented women who had few options other than marriage or teaching open to them. They, in turn, had been taught by Yankee old maids who were devoted to the idea of educating all children, regardless of race, color, creed, or social status, and despite the fact that they often had to beat knowledge into the unwilling minds of their students.

That approach to education is an important one for us to consider today, because the success of the reform movement in higher education we are hearing so much about must be built on the educational foundation students receive before they come to us. We cannot, of course, return to the educational system of the past. Today, talented women have many options open to them and are exercising those options. But a return to the insistence on providing quality education for all students that was prevalent at the Boston Latin School of my day is as pertinent today as it was then.

The education my peers and I received became an avenue for upward mobility economically, socially, and politically. Some of the school's graduates became cardinals, mayors, or governors, and some had sons who became presidents of the United States. We were given an education in the humanities that presupposed that we could learn and expected that we achieve. That is an attitude, unfortunately, that we may have lost.

At the time, I thought learning the rules of Latin grammar was useless, but I learned them and, in the process, gained a foundation in the humanities that made it easy for me to participate in university life, to study history and later to teach it, and to know the real value of an education in the humanities. In short, the skills I gained at the Boston Latin School have proved invaluable for the rest of my life.

The contrast between my educational history and that of the community college students of today has shaped my response not only to Dean Zwerling's address but also to another reform report, William Bennett's *To Reclaim a Legacy*. That report cannot accurately be seen as a call to "reclaim" a common legacy but, rather, to establish one. It is a recommendation that we unify our nation by trying to secure a common fund of knowledge, a repertoire of works and cultural experiences with which we may refer in discourse and argument with one another, and to which we may appeal for shared meanings and values.

It is a recommendation that we reaffirm the primacy of Western culture and promote it as the matrix that will bind us together as a nation.

The diversity of the general population of this country, as well as the diversity of the particular population of our colleges, and especially of our community and junior colleges, should make us particularly sensitive to the possibility that what we are being called to reclaim by Mr. Bennett is not a legacy that is common to us all, but rather a legacy that represents the best of "the Western mind" — the best, that is, of what has always been in this country not the common culture but the dominant culture. We should be clear about what we are doing. We should be clear, that is, about the content of our political agenda and about its nature. The question, then, that we must ask about Mr. Bennett's proposals is not whether they are political in nature, but whether the announcement to society which Mr. Bennett's curriculum proposals make is the one which we want made.

I would like to stress that to ask this is not to question the importance of studying Western civilization, nor is it to question the desirability of trying to secure for ourselves as a nation a collective body of shared knowledge and cultural resources. It is, rather, to affirm that as educators of two-year college students who, as Steven Zwerling has just made clear, represent a multiplicity of cultural backgrounds and outlooks, we cannot accept as a postulate of educational theory and as an unquestionable premise of educational policy that Western cultural traditions are necessary conditions of all human knowledge. Thus, though there is much value in having our students look to primary materials as resources for their studies in the humanities (with the aid, where necessary, of good translations and expert commentary), what we ought to do is work with an expanded notion of what is appropriate as a primary source. "Classics" are to be found not only in ancient Greece and Rome. They also exist closer to home, in the various cultures that inform the multiple traditions of the different peoples of this country, as well as in cultures that are as yet foreign to us all.

Despite the efforts and public exhortations of our national commissions, special committees, humanities associations, and community college associations, there seems to be on the part of those who run our community colleges (both administrators and faculty) a lack of enthusiasm for and excitement about humanities education within our schools. We have much to be concerned about. Few community colleges have introduced innovative humanities courses or programs into their curricula during the past five years, and only a handful of two-year colleges have applied to funding institutions for monies to fund curriculum development or faculty enrichment programs (and few of those who have pursued funding have been as imaginative as Zwerling suggested we should be).

Mr. Bennett claims that "the decline in learning in the humanities was caused in part by a failure of nerve and faith on the part of many college faculties and administrators and persists because of a vacuum in educational leadership." I believe that the decline in humanities studies is attributable to a far more complex set of factors. Whatever the cause of the humanities' decline, however, its reversal is up to us. We must approach the problem of declining interest in the humanities and try our best to rectify it, not merely as sectarians (that is, as advocates of our specific disciplines) whose job it is to impart discipline-specific expertise. Rather, we must face this issue as specialists also in the field of community college teaching and work, on matters that are of common concern to us as educators and administrators of the education of our students. Helping our students to develop into mature, reflective, imaginative, and knowledgeable persons may not involve the reclamation of any common legacy. It will, however, be an investment in a common future.

Clifford Peterson:

MUCH OF WHAT Dean Zwerling discussed today is brought together in a concept called "Shared Vision." The Shared Vision task force, which brings together another affiliate organization of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the National Council for Occupational Education, with which I have been associated for many years, and CCHA, is a very exciting one to all of us who are involved.

In the light of Dean Zwerling's remarks, I trust you will agree that liberal learning is career preparation and that neither is in competition with the other, and I congratulate CCHA in finding a keynote speaker for today who, although he is known as a critic of the community college, has so much to offer. Much of what Dean Zwerling has said today will be useful to those of us serving as members of the task force. Essentially Dr. Zwerling is raising the same question as the Carnegie report on undergraduate experience: "Can the liberal and useful arts be blended during college as they must inevitably be blended during life?" I personally believe that this is probably one of the most important questions of our time, certainly in higher education, and possibly for our nation. It becomes increasingly apparent that one of the crises our country is going to face in the very near future is the widening human-resources gap. Threatening to choke the very life of our country is the fact that the gap is growing rapidly between jobs and job preparation. Dean Zwerling has correctly identified the fact that the missing component in most technical education is liberal learning. I disagree, as does Joshua Smith, with some of his conclusions. I am very much in agreement, however, with his concept of a comprehensive mission for the humanities and

his call for liberal studies for all students, which is also the thrust of the Shared Vision task force.

I probably would have been depressed during the first half of Dean Zwerling's speech, as you were, if I had not already had the opportunity to read the second half. I also know that the aspects of community college education he criticizes are practiced in many places. But I am pleased to report that in Massachusetts state funding is in no way enrollment-driven, and FTEs are not the god that we speak to. Although my own college is ordinary in most ways, there are no Jell-O mold courses, and counselling by a faculty member is required for anyone who registers at our college. I know that this is also the case in the majority of community colleges around the country.

I would also disagree with one minor point that Dean Zwerling made — that students are not interested in higher learning. I think that to the extent this was true a decade ago, it was never as true of the community college student as it was of students in four-year institutions. It certainly is not true of today's students. I believe that the problem is that we have not shown the relevance of liberal learning to success in their personal lives or their careers. Very often what we are teaching is neither relevant nor appropriate, given their particular circumstances at the time. I agree that one way of approaching this problem is to reorganize the curriculum in terms of the three groups of students Dean Zwerling has described.

I also agree most emphatically with most of Dean Zwerling's conclusions, including the fact that faculty are frequently guilty of emphasizing prepackaged bits of factual information. However, one of the conclusions that we came to, first in the two-year study that resulted in *Criteria for Excellence in Career Programs*, published by the NCOE and adopted as national policy by AACJC, is that the answer lies in focusing on what outcomes are desired, on what we expect students to know or do when they finish our courses. Approaching both course construction and curriculum construction from that standpoint can improve the relevance of courses and help us avoid the tendency to stress prepackaged facts and to focus on student learning rather than on what is being taught. It is true that we must sell the humanities, but to do that we must have a better definition of what we are selling and a logical identification of the unique and significant contributions the humanities can make to student learning and to student success. We are dealing with a sophisticated adult population, one that demands that we explain how studying the humanities will benefit them. Without a convincing explanation they are not going to be interested in liberal education — or any form of higher education, for that matter. They are interested in technical and professional education simply because it is very apparent to them how such courses relate to their personal and career success.

To "sell" the humanities we must stress the fact that students are doomed to dead-end jobs if they cannot read, write, think, and communicate. How do we know this? We know this because employers are telling us so. Forward-thinking chief executive officers of large companies are saying it in ways such as, "I am now hiring liberal arts graduates instead of data processing graduates. I can teach them the languages, but I cannot teach them to think." In corporate board rooms in this country this concept is gaining greater and greater recognition as leaders of industry and business find that the liberal arts graduate is often more effective in their organizations than the business graduate or the Harvard MBA.

Coincidental with this awakening of corporate executives to the importance of liberal education as career preparation is the new emphasis on quality. The buzz words, of course, are "excellence" and "quality," which have been given national recognition by the Carnegie report, "The Need to Redefine Undergraduate Education." I think in the community colleges the coincidence of these two facts has given us an exceptional opportunity. Not only are community college people willing to accept some change, but four-year institutions may also come to accept the credits of our graduates more readily.

The most promising answer to today's problems lies not in the imposition of traditionally organized and traditionally taught liberal arts courses, which is what William Bennett has proposed, or through legislation, standardized tests, accreditation requirements, or any of the other simplistic and elitist solutions that are now being proposed. The answer does lie in identifying the student outcomes that can be achieved by the liberal arts and integrating that learning into courses and curricula so as to provide the opportunity for our graduates to be successful — as persons, as family members, as employees, and as citizens, and at the same time to have rewarding careers. That, in a word, is the shared vision our two organizations are working on together.

Who's Afraid of Cultural Literacy?

Catharine R. Stimpson

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE Humanities Association honors me with its invitation to be here today. I wish to thank its board, staff members, conference organizers, and funders for including me. Let me mention some reasons for my pleasure. First, I admire the hard work that community colleges do, the way they serve education. Next, I respect their growth. I need not remind this audience that the number of two-year institutions in the United States doubled between 1955 and 1985. Next, two-year colleges are our pioneers in responding to one of the most important new features in higher education in the United States: its increasing diversity. In 1985, women comprised more than one-half the students enrolled for credit. In 1984, 54 percent of all Hispanics in higher education were in two-year colleges. So were 55 percent of the native Americans and 43 percent of Asians and blacks.[1] Finally, I am paying homage to my mother. For nearly twenty years, she was either a member of the board, or the chair of the board, of the community college in Whatcom County of the State of Washington. If I did not know it before, she taught me about the vision and grit two-year colleges embody.

Given my regard for two-year institutions, it might seem odd that my title, "Who's Afraid of Cultural Literacy?" alludes to that vitriolic exposure of American academic life, the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee. The drama imagines a party of four: George, a history professor; Martha, his wife, the president's daughter; Nick, a biology professor; and Honey, his wife. Their names are hardly innocent of symbolic resonance. At the end of the evening, which ought to make the AAUP quiver, George and Martha, now exhausted, are alone. He sings to her:

> Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf
> Virginia Woolf
> Virginia Woolf

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She answers, "I . . . am . . . George."[2]

For a number of reasons, perhaps for too many reasons, I believe that humanists in the United States are often like George and Martha. Dependent on academic institutions, they nevertheless speak acerbicly, even self-indulgently, about institutional weaknesses. Dependent upon each other, they nevertheless speak acerbicly, even self-indulgently, about each other. Yet George and Martha want to be decent. When the shouting stops, they reveal both tenderness and fear. In their speech is the stuff of the humanities themselves: music, irony, literature.

What do our Georges and our Marthas, in the 1980s, have to do with cultural literacy? Today, that phrase, "cultural literacy," is roaming around the House of Humanities, in which George and Martha dwell. Historically, the architecture of that House is at once grand and flawed; its interior decoration at once opulent and tattered. A resident of that House, I am going to argue for a definition of "cultural literacy" and suggest how that definition might work in the classroom. My argument is inseparable from two acts of faith: one, in the ability of humanists to put aside the dialogues of self-denigration and mutual suspicion and to take up the dialogues of decency; and two, in the ability of the humanities to be musical, ironic, and literate.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., the literary critic, is responsible for the term "cultural literacy." Since 1980, he has argued for the interdependency of two kinds of literacy: knowing how to read, knowing the techniques of literacy, and next, knowing something about what a reader is reading, knowing about the culture that produced the page. Competency and content go together. Literacy should not just be, but mean. If one literacy is missing, so is the other.[3] Hirsch sees profound connections between the fumbling ability of Americans to read and write and the fumbling ability of Americans to share facts about their culture. Far more flexible and socially concerned than his critics often claim, Hirsch does not want to re-impose a list of great books that everyone must read, a canon that everyone must salute. Rather, he calls for some agreement, democratically construed, about what a rough living vocabulary for Americans might be. For example, in the mid-1980s, only one-third of our seventeen-year-olds knew that the Civil War occurred between 1850 and 1900. We would be more literate if at least two-thirds of those kids could pin the tail of time more accurately on the donkey of war.

Possibly, Hirsch insufficiently recognizes how much seventeen-year-olds do know. Whenever I need to learn about popular music, television, or adolescent mores, I turn, not to books or colleagues, but to the two teen-agers who sit across from me at breakfast and dinner. Nevertheless, Hirsch fully recognizes how hard it will be to construe some agreement about an appropriate

cultural vocabulary. Still, he argues, the task must be done. For our mutually reinforcing half-literacies threaten nothing less than our national identity. Possibly, also, Hirsch, in an interdependent globe that nationalistic forces now threaten, too greatly stresses the importance of a national culture. Nevertheless, his moral and pedagogical theories are reliably serious, intelligent, and responsible, and I am indebted to him.

Hirsch's explorations of "cultural literacy," and those of his critics, are not conducted in isolation. Surrounding them is a rich, interdisciplinary literature about reading and readers, writing and writers. I think, for example, of Father Ong's study of oral and literate cultures; of Jonathan Kozol's call for the rebuilding of American literacy; or of Cathy N. Davidson's history, which both reader-response and feminist criticism have influenced, of the novel in the American Republic.[4] This literature itself is enmeshed with the struggle of the 1980s, which can make *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* seem genteel, about the meaning of cultural literacy and, more expansively, about the purposes of education and the humanities. Today, the struggle has at least four schools. I call them the Radical Right, the Neo-Conservative, the Sober Observers, and the Reconstructionists. To characterize them:

The Radical Right swears its allegiance to a single book, a sacred text. In the Christian United States, it is the Holy Bible. "I'm a born-again Christian," said Mrs. Vicki Frost, on the witness stand in a Hawkins County, Tennessee, courtroom, testifying against the reading list in the local primary school, "The word of God is the totality of my beliefs."[5] The humanities, conventionally defined, are a cesspool of secularism and the relativism that secularism breeds as inevitably as pigs do a litter. Ardent and determined, the Radical Right uses local school boards and the courts to impose both "basic skills" and one rigid standard of cultural literacy: submission to the Christian Logos.

The Neo-Conservatives swear their allegiance to a tradition of "great books" and the "universal values" and "universal truths" that these great books, largely Western, reveal. Everyone — whether in Bombay; Artesia, New Mexico; or on the planet Pluto — should read these books, accept these values, believe in these truths. Like the Radical Right, Neo-Conservatives feel besieged and embattled; the Radical Right by modernity, Neo-Conservatives by a liberalism that has putatively entrenched itself in higher education and the media. That liberalism has wreaked cultural havoc. Education offers little but shreds and patches. We have, not cultural literacy, but cultural "litteracy." Grumps one such believer: "They [fashionable humanists] have as often as not degenerated from criticism to nihilism."[6] At their grumpiest, the Neo-Conservatives are arrogant, righteous, and fearful. Self-proclaimed watchdogs, they are the "arf-arf" factor in United States culture in the 1970s and 1980s.

Although the Neo-Conservatives have written some of those recent reports about education and the humanities, the Sober Observers have been responsible for many of them as well. The Sober Observers tend to be more sorrowful, less strident, than the Neo-Conservatives. At their best, they have asked impeccable questions about education and society. Lamenting the fragmentation of the curriculum, the Sober Observers call for a renewal, although not necessarily a restoration, of the moral purpose and coherence of the humanities. In so doing, surprisingly, they echo the plaint of male Western modernists: that the center will not hold; that we languish on the garbage-strewn riverbanks of life. Sober Observers can grant cultural pursuits a certain gratuitous pleasure. However, they more often justify education because it makes America more secure, especially economically, a justification that the male Western modernists whom they otherwise echo would find vulgar.

The Reconstructionists offer a definition of cultural literacy in which I believe and which I would urge the humanities to accept fearlessly. Thus far, the Radical Right, the Neo-Conservatives, and many of the Sober Observers have not accepted this invitation. For the Reconstructionist, cultural literacy entails accepting at least three ideas about culture, which can point to a visionary politics for the twenty-first century.

First, the Reconstructionist believes in, even marvels at, culture's fertility and capacity for change, be those mutations abrupt or evolutionary. Let us, the Reconstructionist urges, enter the new world bravely. Interestingly, more and more people who are not self-conscious Reconstructionists are asking our schools and colleges to prepare citizens for change. I think, for example, of a recent contract between the Communications Workers of America and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. The contract called for a nonprofit institute that would pay two-year and four-year colleges to counsel and retrain AT&T employees.[7] Whether or not such institutes will recognize the claims of the humanities is a question that should provoke us all.

Cultural change erupts or oozes out for many reasons. Among them is the fact that people act, lovingly or belligerently, in the present. Let me offer an allegory of such a pressure for difference. In a dramatic monologue, a young Hispanic poet speaks up to "Mother Poetry." As he addresses the Muse, he adapts the genderized tradition of Virgil and Milton. The young poet talks about "suave and beautiful poetry," verses about flowers and trees, birds and bees. He mentions Shakespeare, Cummings, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. But the young poet moves on from them to the poet of the twenty-first century. Vulgarly, the poet of the twenty-first century asks Mother Poetry to shape up. She weeps, questions, sighs, cries, but she wakes up, rubs her eyes, and sees an era of new, truthful, "angry, biting, scratching poets."[8] Moreover, the Reconstructionist notes, our sense of what the past is changes because the present constantly

rereads the past through its own eyes. The Reconstructionist has read T. S. Eliot, that canonical figure, and his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In 1919, after the catastrophe of World War I, Eliot declared that "the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."[9]

Next, the Reconstructionist concludes that "truth" is not the product of a single monolithic perspective. Rather, "truth" is a composite of the "truths" that multiple, diverse, and heterogeneous perspectives provide. They flow from multiple, diverse, and heterogeneous experiences, which different languages filter for us. Surely, a feature of the two-year college classroom is that it contains these experiences and these languages. Contemporary philosophy and critical theory — including the contributions of feminism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis — can help us analyze this concept of "the truth."[10]

Third and finally, the Reconstructionist analyzes cultural literacy as the ability to read the maps of a particular society and its history. The adolescents with whom I eat ought to know about Phillis Wheatley as well as Madonna. So should I. The Reconstructionist then adds that cultural literacy also means knowing about map-making — knowing about the process of knowing itself. How different would Phillis Wheatley seem if race and gender had not influenced canon formation? How different do Madonnas seem if we interpret them through painted icons, printed pages, or panning cameras?

No single humanities curriculum, to be replicated in every classroom, can embody these three abstractions. Indeed, Reconstructionist logic demands that we share curricula — that we pass syllabi about in comparative flurries. "My" curriculum consists of three consecutive stages, each a list of texts and events for a class to encounter. We can never abolish lists if we are to live. However, we can go public with our answer to the question of who makes the lists, for whom, and why. I would build "my" curriculum to show cultures, in their diversities, as a process. However, to appreciate process means having a certain stability; to appreciate diversity means having a certain security. To help create that sense of stability and security, "my" college curriculum starts with a linear narrative about America's own weird, complex history. The first point on that line is the land itself, the land as it was before the first settlers arrived. As the narrative "line" weaves through human history, it organizes itself around a set of cultural tensions in constant motion: the tension between freedom and authority; the tension between heterogeneity and the appetite for a common, even hegemonic, national identity. For example, when the narrative shuttles towards the seventeenth century, it could stop at four texts: native American myths, legends, and rituals; the record of the 1637-38 trials of Anne Hutchinson; the poems of Anne Bradstreet, first published in 1650; and finally, the narrative of

Mary Rowlandson, issued in 1682, about her capture by native Americans during the liberation struggles in 1676.

After such American studies, after such self-consciousness, "my" curriculum turns outward. No curriculum, of course, can do all of earthly time, all of earthly space. Twirling the globe is like twirling a baton. Both activities demand skill, but when they are over, not much is left except the memory of a twirl. To run from this danger, "my" curriculum operates on the principle of synchronicity. That is, I might select one or two significant periods, and then, cutting shafts through the earth, I might show what was happening simultaneously in many places, and how each place thought of the others, if indeed they did. Let us say I were to use a Eurocentric system of dating and select 622 A.D. In that year Muhammed was fleeing from dangers in Mecca. The last of the great monotheisms was about to begin formally. To the west, Greece and Rome were political shambles. To the east, in China, the T'ang dynasty was commencing.

After studying the otherness of others, "my" curriculum would then end with attempts to dramatize the future: utopias, dystopias, and science fiction. They reflect the incorrigible human imagination at work, a labor that the humanities have celebrated, especially since the Romantic period. These texts also show the imagination trying to picture differences — domains unlike their own — a labor that the humanities ought to celebrate, especially in the postmodern, heterogeneous period. Among my novels would be *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand,*[11] the first panel in a diptych by Samuel R. Delaney. On the planetarium of the page, Delaney projects a whorling plot about galaxies that contain about 6,200 inhabited worlds. Connecting them, controlling the flow of information among them, is the "Web." Two systems, the "Family" and the "Sygn," struggle for political dominance. Indeed, the delight in dominance has carried over into the future, like a bad gene. Obliquely, Delaney is also alluding to the vast competition between structures of kinship and structures of communication for our allegiance.

Like many contemporary speculative fictions, *Stars in My Pocket* finds conventional heterosexuality absurd. The central figures are two men, Rat Korga and Marq Dyeth, who have a complex, but ecstatic affair. Marq is also the product of a rich "nurture stream." His ancestry includes both humans and aliens. His genetic heritage blends differences. In a sweet scene, he sees three of his mothers: Maxa, a biogenetist, an "evelm" with gorgeous wings; Egri, an industrial diplomat, a "human" with long yellow hair; and Shoshona, an architectural consultant, a "human" with knuckles like silver berries. However, Delaney is less concerned with the ability of various species to breed with each other than he is with the ability of members of various species to speak to each other. How do we create a cosmic cultural literacy? Technology helps. Rat finds

about 500 little cubes and the machinery that enables even illiterates to read them instantly. They contain poetry, epic narratives, history, and philosophy —in many languages. More important than technology is an education that trains a Marq to travel, not only intergalatically, but from one semiotic system to another, from one language pattern to another. Indeed, intergalatic travel is a metaphor for semiotic journeys. In a space ship, Marq broods:

> To leave one part of a world in order to visit another is to indulge in a transformation of signs, their appearances, their meanings, that, however violent, still, because of the coherence of the transformative system itself, partakes of a logic.[12]

Perhaps "my" curriculum itself seems utopian. For who will support it? Enroll for it? Haunting any discussion of cultural literacy is the recognition of the marginality of the humanities, the guardians of both culture and literacy, despite required courses and unctuous lip service to our humanistic heritage. According to a recent report, electives in the humanities at a Florida junior college are "dying." Though the student body numbers between nine and ten thousand, they want only one section of creative writing, only one section of film, each semester.[13] According to reports from all regions, faculties of business, engineering, and science pull down bigger pay checks than humanists.

Humanists cannot control the larger society that marginalizes the humanities. Humanists have not hammered out the world in which an arbitrageur earns immensely more than a French linguist. Unhappily, a suspect feature of many of the reports from the Sober Observers is the assumption that humanists have brought their marginality upon themselves through their love affair with footnotes and their deadly infatuation with specialization. However, humanists can control their response to marginality. We can choose to be anxious, defensive, and decorously pious about our mission, or, preferably, reconstructively, we can choose another, more glowing set of responses. First, we can do what women's studies has done and see marginality, not as a curse, but as a source of insight. One can see a lot, in several directions, from the vantage of the borders. Next, we can work to connect the "academic humanities" with the "nonacademic humanities." We can interweave higher education with primary schools or museums or TV studios or public humanities organizations.[14] If we do so, we will actively create a vast web of culture and literacy. That web will uphold a generous, expansive theory of cultural literacy. Sustained by that web, no one need fear Virginia Woolf, or Alice Walker's revision of Virginia Woolf. We will fear, instead, a world that fears Virginia Woolf, or Alice Walker's revision of Woolf, and we will always, always, challenge it.

Notes

[1] *Higher Education and National Affairs*, October 6, 1986, p. 3.

[2] Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), p. 141.

[3] A recent summary piece is E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "Cultural Literacy Does Not Mean a List of Works," *ADE Bulletin*, vol. 84 (Fall 1986), pp. 1-3. Not surprisingly, given its importance, Hirsch's work has stimulated several responses. See, for example, Linda Spoerl, "Canon, Curriculum, and Cultural Literacy," *Community College Humanities Review*, no. 6 (Winter 1983-84), pp. 87-104.

[4] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982); Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Press/ Doubleday, 1985); Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and The Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[5] As quoted in Dudley Clendinen, "Fundamentalist Parents Put Textbooks on Trial," *New York Times*, July 15, 1986.

[6] Roger Kimball, "Debating the Humanities at Yale," *New Criterion*, vol. 4, no. 10 (June 1986), p. 33.

[7] "Need to Retrain People in Changing Fields Confronts Colleges with Creative Challenge," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 17, 1986, pp. 37-38.

[8] Jesus Papoleto Meldendez, "The New Era: The Twenty-First Century Poet," *Talkin' About Us: Writing by Students in the Upward Bound Program*, ed. Bill Wertheim with the assistance of Irma Gonzelez (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1970), pp. 87-90.

[9] T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1950), p. 6.

[10] A valuable new text shows how we can translate contemporary theory for the classroom. See Cary Nelson, ed., *Theory in the Classroom* (Champaign, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

[11] (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 358.

[13] Sylvia A. Holladay, "The Challenge to the Humanities in the Two-Year College: Going Beyond the Information Given," *ADE Bulletin*, vol. 84 (Fall 1986), pp. 6-10.

[14] I discuss this more fully in my essay, "The Humanities and Everyday Life," in *The Humanities and Civic Responsibility*, ed. Hilda L. Smith (Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1986), pp. 33-47.

Contemplating the Success of American Political Life in a Bicentennial Era: Fortune, Virtue, and Constitutional "Structures of Compromise"

José M. Peer

I compare fortune to one of those violent rivers, which, when they are enraged, flood the plains, tear down trees and buildings, wash soil from one place to deposit in another. Everyone flees before them, everybody yields to their impetus, there is no possibility of resistance. Yet although such is their nature, it does not follow that when they are flowing quietly one cannot take precaution, constructing dykes and embankments so that when the river is in flood it runs into a canal or else its impetus is less wild and dangerous. So it is with fortune.
— Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter 25.

THE CELEBRATION OF the anniversary of the constitutional founding of a nation presents for its people boundless opportunities. To reflect on, to learn to ponder, and to absorb the historical experience of one's nation is not only a sobering and enlightening undertaking, but is also undoubtedly a responsibility of citizenship in any nation. The connecting and reconnecting of the seemingly seamless present into the tapestry of a nation's past allows a people to reconfirm their national identity and purpose. To recall the nation's past is to live the panorama of national experience. Too often people suffer a collective amnesia, mindless to the experiences of the past. The recollection and re-creation of these experiences establish the continuum of a nation's being. Only by reaffirming the collective, national purpose are a people encouraged, that is, persuaded and instilled with the courage necessary, to proceed in the face of the innumerable obstacles, contradictions, and ambiguities that plague all national enterprises in the late twentieth century. To establish the context of historical experience is to assert the integrity and continuity of past experience for the future.

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The celebration of the bicentennial of the signing of the Constitution in 1787 provides Americans with unique opportunities for self-examination because of the context of our founding and the particular character of our national being. Compared to practically all other nations among modern, first-world nations, ours is unique in having been forged in a revolutionary context. To locate our founding in a particular historical moment is not to deny the importance for our development of the Western tradition, the heritage of English political ideas and practices, or our colonial experiences, but it does point out an important contrast with most other nations. Consider the case of our former mother country today — do we mean England, or the United Kingdom, or Great Britain, or even the Commonwealth? Though some specific date can be associated with each, does that date signify the founding of the nation? Well, yes and no. While most first-world nations just happened, through a multiplicity of causes and conditions, to come into existence over time, ours happened at a particular moment.

The circumstances of our nationhood have much to do with our national character. Political regimes come into being to address the twofold problems of domestic law and order and external security. The American political regime arose to address these tasks, and for other reasons as well. The revolutionary context and character of our founding is reflected in the fact that our national being manifests a purposefulness: in the Declaration, "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men"; in the Preamble, "in Order to form a more perfect Union"; and in Lincoln's memorable words, "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Because our national purpose involves more than just the normal law, order, and security purposes of government, the opportunities inherent in this bicentennial era are considerably enhanced.

I

JUST AS THERE are opportunities presented to us in the celebration of this bicentennial era, there are also some very real perils on which students of national experience and well-being ought to reflect. The celebration of the Constitution is above all else a political activity; the danger here is that the celebration is susceptible to the partisan purposes of this or that ideological persuasion. We should be mindful of the possibility of abuses inherent in the politicalization of these events. Guarding against this possibility will require the vigilance of us all. A second peril is more banal but nonetheless insidious. In my worst moments contemplating the possible course of the bicentennial, I imagine plastic, true-to-life replicas of the Constitution which glow in the dark and go whizbang, boom, pop at the insertion of newly minted commemorative coins. There is the danger that commercialization will diminish the educational

potential of the bicentennial celebration. It is a real possibility that we will pass through this celebration without developing the American people's understanding of the Constitution and the role it has played in the creation and development of our political way of life.

There is also a third danger in placing too much emphasis on the Constitution as a textual document. Not that the Constitution should not be read, analyzed, and interpreted as part of bicentennial activities; the more of this that is done, the higher the educational quality of the celebration will be. But the document needs to be read in the context of its creation and the whole sweep of its historical development. The perseverance of our constitutional system, which was above all the great intention and objective of the founding generation, has been due to the flexibility, the adaptability, the very historicity of the document. The Constitution is a living document; not only has it had a life, but also it is alive. To view it otherwise would be to view it as a dead document, severed from the context of its creation and the political life it has created.

The fourth and greatest peril we face approaching the bicentennial, though, is that it will become an occasion for nothing more than nationalistic chest-beating. There is no doubt that the success story of the American political way of life is both remarkable and unique; nor is there doubt that this ought to be an occasion of national celebration and pride. But for it to become an occasion for asserting the superiority of the American people and their political way of life would be national folly and hubris of the highest order.

For some, this kind of self-praise may not seem so inappropriate. They might argue that America needs and deserves recognition for its constitutional and political accomplishments. This sentiment has a certain validity, but perhaps an example from our history will show the extent of danger posed when Americans attribute virtues to themselves and their political way of life out of proportion to reality. If we look in general at American attitudes towards U.S. foreign policy from the inception of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 through the end of World War II, we see Americans embracing a cultural view of American prowess and accomplishment that eventuated in calamity.

When America entered the twentieth century, just at the moment when the frontier had closed and Manifest Destiny spilled out over the continental boundaries, Americans evinced a self-confidence in their ability to control events in their relations with the world. Our record in foreign relations appeared as one of great accomplishment and mastery. The main objective of the nineteenth century, enunciated in the Monroe Doctrine, had been achieved: the New World was free from Old World dominance, and its development had been shaped by New, rather than Old World forces. America accepted the credit for this feat. The history of the first half of the twentieth century, with its wars, both

declared and undeclared, is attributable in some measure to our misjudgment in claiming as our own what is more properly attributable either to circumstances beyond our control or to the capabilities of others.

It has been clear for some time now that American security and ability to achieve the ends of the Monroe Doctrine rested on British naval control of the seas. The conjunction of American and British interests in isolating the Americas from European politics was not even dimly recognized by Americans. It is true that in formulating the Doctrine, President Monroe and Secretary of State Adams, as well as former Presidents Jefferson and Madison, who were both consulted, recognized the role of British naval power in realizing the Doctrine's success. In fact, the Doctrine was initially intended to be a joint statement by both powers, though this did not occur because of differences regarding the recognition of newly independent nations in Latin America. By the time of the Spanish-American War in 1896, the American public had no understanding of the British role in the success of the Monroe Doctrine, and this role had largely been forgotten by policy-makers. Subsequently, our entry into Asia and the policy which evolved after we acquired the Phillipines was based on confidence in our ability to achieve our ends. We assumed that the mere announcement of our objectives would guarantee success because of their self-evident idealism, legalism, and moral correctness. This had worked, we believed, for the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America; it was assumed it would also work in Asia. But it was not the superiority of our people or of our policy pronouncements that allowed the objectives of the Doctrine to be met; they were met because of the conjunction of British and American commercial, naval, and security interests and the former's control of the seas. In Asia we continued to pursue a policy of moral righteousness, oblivious to our own interests as well as those of our allies and potential adversaries. The debt for presumptuously attributing superior morality and political abilities to ourselves has since been repaid, *in toto* one would hope, at Pearl Harbor and other battlefields in Asia.[1]

This example should remind us of the danger of claiming too much for ourselves when reflecting on our constitutional and national accomplishments and successes. Ours is a nation that has been inordinately blessed with human and material qualities over which we have had very little actual control. If these are forgotten or trivialized, then we will end up once again unrealistically overemphasizing our own abilities, a course that has led in the past to disaster. The question arises, then, during this bicentennial celebration: to what degree and in what manner are we as a people and a nation responsible for the success of our political way of life?

Perhaps no thinker in the Western tradition devoted as much attention to this kind of question than Machiavelli. The opposition between "fortune" and

"virtue" in human affairs was an important theme in Renaissance ideas. The effect of this opposition was to dramatize the human condition as a struggle between the determination of life by luck or chance versus the human will or the choices of man. Machiavelli may be credited, among others, with directing this theme to political life and attempting to specify what credit men could claim for their political successes and failures.[2]

II

IN THE FINAL chapter of *The Prince*, entitled "Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Barbarians," Machiavelli, noting that circumstances had never been more propitious, calls for a "new prince" to redeem Italy from its invaders and to return the country to its past greatness and splendor. In a variety of ways, Machiavelli sought to achieve for his country what we now celebrate in the accomplishment of our founding generation. Our founders had no great past to return to or to call upon as a model for the future. Nor did they rely, to any great extent, on the methods and tactics Machiavelli recommended would be necessary for the prince capable of uniting Italy. Yet Machiavelli has more to say about evaluating the constitutional republic bequeathed to us than we are perhaps willing to concede.

The penultimate chapter raises the issue of "how far human affairs are governed by fortune and how fortune can be opposed." Admitting that he has often despaired when contemplating that chance or god determines the events and directions of human affairs, Machiavelli asserts, "Nonetheless, so as not to rule out our free will, I believe that it is probably true that fortune is the arbiter of half the things we do, leaving the other half or so to be controlled by ourselves."[3] For Machiavelli, the wiles of "fortune" were opposed by "virtue," the mastery of human will — the ability of humans to impose their choices and values on the capriciousness of events. While Machiavelli's reputation has been constructed on the audaciousness of his assertions, this one is remarkable for its modesty. No argument is made in defense of the validity of virtue or free will *per se;* he merely does not want it eliminated. Nor is the assertion that fortune controls only a part of human affairs made absolutely; it is only stated as probable. And it is not claimed that man controls even half of his affairs; it is but "half or so." Machiavelli's ambiguity in allotting shares to the agency of fortune and virtue in human affairs suggests that he was, perhaps, too generous on the account of virtue. In the spirit of this ambiguity, it is possible to assign a greater role to fortune and consequently a lesser one to virtue in determining human affairs than he was willing to admit.

The context and intention of *The Prince* needs to be recalled. Because of his bureaucratic role in the Florentine republic, Machiavelli was punished and banned from public life with the collapse of the republic and the return of the

Medici. The book is dedicated to Lorenzo de'Medici in a none-too-subtle attempt to win favor and some position of service in the Medici regime. It is not improbable that Machiavelli overstated the role of virtue in human affairs to flatter the Medici and thereby win their attention and favor.[4] There is another reason for suspecting that Machiavelli inflated the role of virtue, which has to do with the effect of unanticipated events. He sees this effect particularly in the career of Cesare Borgia, who exemplified what was possible for a prince to achieve in the political realm: "I know no better precepts to give a new prince than ones derived from Cesare's actions; and if what he instituted was of no avail, this was not his fault but arose from the extraordinary and inordinate malice of fortune."[5] Cesare had been remarkably successful in carving out a kingdom for himself in central Italy, and he had been greatly aided in this task by his father, Pope Alexander VI. Cesare had prepared in his schemes for the eventuality of his father's death but had not reckoned with the possibility that he himself would be near death when Alexander passed from the scene. What Machiavelli emphasizes here is that, in spite of his own self-reliance and virtue, all that Cesare had sought to accomplish was wiped out by a conjunction of events that could not be anticipated.

Assuming Machiavelli exaggerated the agency of virtue in human affairs and, consequently, that fortune is responsible for somewhat greater than half of all "the things we do," it is possible to examine what role fortune and virtue have performed in the success of American political life. This view of the matter will allow a more honest assessment of what role the Constitution has played in American politics and how much of our national success may be attributed to it. Fortune plays a larger role than is likely to be admitted in this bicentennial era, but, if the Constitution and the political life emanating from it are here de-emphasized, their role in our national success is illuminated and reasons are delineated for justly recognizing and celebrating the Constitution.

I suggest three factors of the American experience which together are capable of accounting for the preponderant proportion of the success of American political life. The first two are macro-explanations of our historical development; they are recognized as "theses" in American history, seeking not just to explain some particular aspect of our history but rather the whole sweep of the American experience. These are Turner's well-known "frontier thesis" and Hartz's lesser-known thesis concerning the predominance of the "liberal tradition" in American history. The third factor is the Constitution, the political life it generated, and the impact both have had on American history. Fortune, it is asserted, accounts for the first two factors; at least it can be argued that fortune, the determination of events beyond human control, shaped the manifestation of these factors.

With the possible exception of Charles Beard's economic interpretation of the Constitution, no other conceptual thesis in American history has received as much attention as Fredrick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," which argues that American history has been determined, in large measure, by the presence of a frontier which, beginning on the Eastern seaboard, marched through time across the American continent. The frontier experience was the result of open, unsettled lands to the west as well as the effect of this circumstance on the development of American consciousness. Free land in the west attracted settlers and immigrants by offering the possibility of land ownership and life opportunities unavailable in Europe or in the more settled regions of the East. The frontier experience shaped the American character into one of individualism, practical know-how, and self-reliance. On the frontier, status was achieved rather than ascribed; social relations were established less on the basis of who one was than on what one had accomplished and made of oneself. The frontier functioned as a kind of safety valve, releasing societal, religious, and economic tensions built up in Europe and in the eastern regions of America. The settlers were not only pulled by potential opportunities in the west but also pushed by the circumstances of their own localities and personal lives.[6]

The role of the frontier in American history is a consequence of fortune: an unformed, largely uninhabited continent, rich in resources and human potentiality, reflecting the munificence of fortune's bequest to our history and national being. To stress the "fortunate" material of the American experience is not to deny the role of virtue in individual success on the frontier and in forming what we have collectively become. But it is possible in this case to say, "No stage, no play." Without the frontier, without the raw matter of western spaces, America would be some other kind of nation and we would be some other kind of people. The stress should be not on what a superior people we are or on what a superior form of political life we have, but on the plethora of opportunities fortune allowed us.

Another thesis concerning American history is the Hartzian or "liberal tradition" thesis, which seeks to explain the relative paucity of reactionary conservative and radical socialist ideologies among American public philosophies and the concomitant dominance of liberalism in our public life. In *The Liberal Tradition in America,* Hartz points not to the presence of geographic and spatial features to explain the American experience but rather to the absence of certain social structural ones. What distinguished America from Europe, Hartz argues, was the absence of feudalism. The ideological content of European politics had been shaped by the interests of the upper and lower classes during the transformation of feudalism under the influence of modernization. As feudalism began to disintegrate, the upper classes generated reactionary ideologies in order to maintain their power and protect their

interests. In a like manner, the lower classes adopted radical ideologies, which both hastened the disintegrative processes of feudalism and rationalized new social formations within which they would be able to exercise power and achieve their interests. In both of these cases, Hartz grounds ideology in social classes. The absence of feudalism in America meant the absence of social classes with either an interest or disinterest in its transformation; hence, conservative and socialist ideas have been weak on the American scene because the social bases for these ideologies did not exist. Hartz views America as distinct in that its social formation included a large middle class that adopted liberal rather than reactionary or radical ideologies. Hartz does not envision this liberal tradition as unproblematic, pointing specifically to its intolerance of deviant ideologies in domestic politics and its inability to comprehend the diversity of challenges posed for America by foreign nations, but he does applaud the consensual tenor the liberal tradition has given to American political life.[7]

The presence of certain material factors, such as the frontier, and the absence of other social structural features, such as feudalism, explain much of the success of American political life. The frontier provided the arena for social and economic success and in the process drew the American character along individualistic lines. The absence of feudalism moderated the extremes of social and ideological conflict and shaped the contours within which the ethos of individualism could be contained for collective purposes.

In all of this, fortune rather than virtue determined and shaped the destiny of America. The effect of delineating the role of fortune in the American experience does not detract from the validity of our political success. It reminds us, in a Machiavellian vein, that fortune does have a significant effect on human affairs. Though the realm of virtue is more narrow than we may appreciate, there is an arena in which our choices and values have had an effect. For America this "virtuous" arena has been carved out by the Constitution and the political life which it makes possible.

III

THE EFFECT OF the Constitution on American political life has been to provide an arena for political compromise, and it is principally to this virtue that the success of our political life may be attributed. The spirit of compromise permeates American constitutional and political development throughout. American politics has worked best when it has been structured by compromise: from the passage of the Bill of Rights (the capstone of the founders' Constitution) through the revival of the Jefferson-Adams friendship in 1812; the "Era of Good Feelings" during the Monroe administration; the Compromise of 1850 (the breaking of which, with the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, led directly to the Civil War); the return of Lee's sword by Grant at Appomattox; the deal

leading to Hayes' presidential election in 1876; and the economically ameliorative effects of the progressive administrations and Roosevelt's New Deal. Our inclination and ability to compromise is grounded in the Constitution. This is true not simply because the Constitution is a "bundle of compromises." There are other ways in which the Constitution manifests a cultural inclination to compromise that need to be taken into account. These "structures of compromise" permeate our constitutional and political life.

It is commonplace to observe that the Constitution is a bundle of compromises reflecting tensions and conflicts among the states of late eighteenth-century America. Most prominent is the Grand or Connecticut Compromise by which the large and small states agreed to represent equally states and population in each house of the legislature respectively. Welded to this deal were compromises concerning bicameralism and federalism. Other compromises grew out of other differences among the states. Slavery, hidden behind some of these, manifested itself in the infamous "3/5 compromise," which counted slaves as less-than-completely-human for purposes of representation in the lower house. The manufacturing and extractive features of state economies, in conjunction with their importing and exporting features, dictated compromises on types of taxes and slave importing. In exchange for approving direct taxes, the slave states were allowed to continue to import slaves for at least twenty years.[8] In these ways, the Constitution was unavoidably grounded in compromise. But these eighteenth-century compromises, in themselves, are not sufficient to account for the continuing inclination of Americans to compromise. This cultural inclination is reflected in the deep structure of the Constitution.

The constitutional heritage of America, a heritage linking it with the Renaissance and the Classical world, is the theory of "the mixed constitution."[9] The Greeks first recognized that constitutions were one of three varieties: the one, the few, and the many. All constitutions were either dominated by a single individual, a group of individuals (be their rule based on blood, inherited position, or education), or the people. Some Greeks viewed each of the three basic constitutional forms as having two types, one good and the other evil. The "good" forms, in which the mode of rule was in the interest of all, were monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; the "evil" forms, in which rule was in the interest of the rulers, were tryanny, oligarchy, and anarchy. Because the Greeks viewed time as a cycle (that is, everything in human time had already happened and would happen again), they viewed the six possible constitutional formations as constituting a cycle. Though they were able to distinguish conceptually between good and evil constitutions, they were unable to break out of the cycle of political instability. They knew how to create a good constitution, but they

were unable to show how its degeneration into evil could be prevented. The passing of the Greek political world is due to this conceptual failure.

In the second century B.C. Polybius devised a way to overcome the degenerative tendencies of Greek constitutional ideas. Mixing the constitution, by representing the one, the few, and the many in a single constitution, Polybius argued, would result in a stable constitution, thus bringing an end to the degenerative cycle.[10] Polybius' discovery was reinforced by the rise of Christianity, which brought a new consciousness of human time: history proper. The Greeks were not at all conscious of human history as such. Time was a cycle of eternally recurrent events; there was literally nothing new under the sun. History was a product of Christian consciousness, which assumed a beginning (the Creation) and a terminus (the Second Coming) for all of human experience.[11] In this way, constitutional ideas became historical. By a long and circuitous route, Polybius' ideas would result in "separation of powers."

The introduction of mixed-constitution conceptualization into the English-speaking world was undramatic but decisive for American constitutional development. With Charles II's "Answer to the Nineteen Propositions" in 1642, English constitutional thought came increasingly to be dominated by notions of balance — that is, constitutional balance among the king (one), the House of Lords (few), and the House of Commons (many), and of balance between the Constitution and society.[12] With time, the three parts of the constitution were viewed as representing the three parts of society: the monarchical family, the aristrocacy, and the people. Because society was uniform, Americans, as heirs to mixed-constitution modes of thought, were faced with a crisis in constitutional ideas following the Revolution.

Because feudalism was foreign to the American experience, a true aristocracy had never developed, and, with the Revolution, monarchy had been decisively rejected. Society could no longer be viewed as tripartite because it had become uniform and democratic, composed only of the people (the many). What or who were represented, then, in the three parts of the Constitution? There was only one possible resolution: the people were represented in all parts of the Constitution, though the aristocratic persuasion of the founders led them to temper this with the device of indirect elections for judicial authorities, the president, and senators. The effect of this resolution was to sever society dramatically from the Constitution.

Before the Revolution, the theory of the mixed constitution dictated an organic and intimate relationship between the Constitution and society. Whatever conflicts existed among the three parts of society were reproduced in the Constitution itself because each part was represented in the Constitution. The Constitution represented the compromise of conflict in society institutionally and presumably in practice also. This was the significance of the balance

between the Constitution and society. But because in America society was uniform, this balancing function was no longer possible or necessary. In spite of democracy, society was severed from the Constitution. Two consequences for the American Constitution ensued.

Because conflict in society could no longer be directly mediated by the Constitution, some other device was needed. Madison's discussion in *Federalist* No. 10 can be viewed in this light. Madison showed how, given the dissipation of the balancing or compromising function of the mixed Constitution, society could become a mechanism for balancing itself. By adopting the Constitution and bringing the states into the national government, the sphere of American society would be expanded. In this way, the multiplicity and variety of interests composing society would constitute an internal balance, checking the possibility of any interest or group of interests from dominating the Constitution. Society itself became a compromise; it became pluralist.

But there was an obverse side to this as well. Just as the Constitution was stripped of its compromising function for society, which had come to be viewed as uniform, it enhanced its ability to balance and compromise itself. Separation of powers did not mean separation of functions. Neither in the English Constitution nor in the practice of colonial government had governing functions been distinct and separate. Separation of powers meant separate institutions sharing in the exercise of legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The exercise of power by the branches of American government continues to be a manifestation of compromise among the three branches because each shares in the exercise of the others' powers.

Federalism too can be viewed as a manifestation of the deep structure of compromise in the Constitution. Two points can be made here. Martin Diamond's "The *Federalist* View of Federalism" articulates the first. Diamond successfully argues that the founders never intended to create the new form of government which we now call federalism. Recapitulating the context of eighteenth-century ideas concerning the allocation of sovereignty among the national and state governments, Diamond demonstrates that the founders had two alternatives available to them: either the nationalist alternative, which placed sovereignty in the national government, or the federalist one (in the term's eighteenth-century meaning and what "confederalist" means today), which placed it in state governments. Diamond develops Madison's argument in *Federalist* No. 39 that the Constitution, considered from the view of its foundation, the sources, operation, and extent of its powers, and its mode of amending, is a delicate and intricate mixture of nationalist and federalist allocations of sovereignty. What Diamond persuasively argues is that the founders did not mean to create a third alternative, which is what "federalism" means today. Rather, the founder's view was that federalism was a "compound,"

a mixture of the two original eighteenth-century types. Diamond's argument is subtle but asserts that federalism be correctly viewed as a compound or mixture of opposites.[13]

A second point suggests a similar view. At the core of the constitutional definition of federalism are delegated, reserved, and concurrent powers. The definitions of the first two are contained in the Tenth Amendment, the capstone of the founders' original constitution: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Delegated powers are positively defined and explicity enumerated in the Constitution. Reserved powers are negatively defined; the states are prohibited from exercising those powers which are denied them by the Constitution or which are exercised by the federal government. All other powers, none of which are explicitly stated in the Constitution, are reserved powers. Concurrent powers are nowhere expressly defined but are obviously those powers exercised by both federal and state governments. The current understanding of federalism sees the post-New Deal era as one of extra-constitutional expansion of federal power through both the illegitimate growth of implied powers and the unwarranted encroachment of reserved powers. But this view fails to take into account the growth of "corporate federalism," the development of collaborative areas of policy-making shared by the federal and state governments.[14]

The effect of the Constitution on American political life is not limited to the effect of the deep structures of compromise the document contains. The success of any constitutional and political way of life is dependent on its ability to produce a competent leadership capable of flourishing within a politics of compromise. What I have in mind here is the alteration in Madison's constitutional throught from the opening of the Constitutional Convention to the writing of the *Federalist* papers. In the Virginia plan, Madison proposed a constitutional scheme which was thoroughly nationalist in allocating sovereignty and which fused rather than separated powers among the branches. The plan included provisions for a national negative or veto over state laws, thus eliminating reserved powers, and for legislative selection of the executive and judiciary. The consequence would have been the exact opposite of the political structures evolved by the adopted Constitution.[15] By the time of *The Federalist*, though, Madison was able to give the greatest elucidation and defense of the Constitution ever written. The development of Madison's constitutional thought is remarkable, and it foreshadowed what future national leaders would be able to accomplish by accommodating their own personal viewpoints and perspectives to the demands of public opinion, adversaries, and other circumstances.

It would be too much to claim that the Constitution is the cause of compromise in American public life. No doubt the inclination to compromise is

more deeply grounded in American culture and character, but that the Constitution has been a clear and consistent manifestation of this inclination can be seen in its deep structure. Madison did not invent the pluralist society, though he comprehended its meaning for our constitutional development. Americans did not invent separation of powers and federalism so much as they adapted constitutional theories to the particular circumstances of American politics. The Constitution established an arena of virtue (a realm within which the people could express their values and choices) for American public life because the founding generation was able to agree on the compromise necessary to ratify the document. Whether reflecting a cultural inclination to compromise or animating that inclination, the Constitution became the device by which Americans could stem the rampages of fortune. It became the arena of virtue within which we were able to achieve the successes of American political life. If fortune, through its munificence, expanded the chances for constitutional and political success, virtue and the constitutional structures of compromise assured Americans the opportunity actually to achieve that success. In contemplating the meaning of the bicentennial celebration for our public life, we need to be mindful of Machiavelli's metaphor of fortune as a river and virtue as its embankments; the Constitution has been the dike for the flowing river that is America.

Notes

[1] This story is well told in all its horrific details and consequences in Walter Lippman's *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943), and George F. Kennan's *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (New York: Mentor, 1951). Lippman, writing in the heat of battle, is especially vitriolic in reconstructing delusions in American thinking and perceptions during this period. But he is nonetheless scrupulously honest in locating his earlier work among these. Kennan is more reflective and guarded in tone. Both works reflect the new realism which infected American foreign policy in the postwar era.

[2] Quinton Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1: *The Renaissance* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 88–102. Skinner traces the recovery of classical ideas during the Reanissance in general and in Florence in particular. Skinner's work is a masterful recreation of the political context of Florentine political ideas.

[3] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and with an introduction by George Bull (New York: Penguin, 1975), p. 130.

[4] A recent article by Mary Dietz, "Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," *American Political Science Review* 80 (September 1986), calls this standard interpretation of Machiavelli's intention into question. Arguing that Machiavelli remained truer to his republicanism than has been assumed, even by his defenders, Dietz argues that he tried to deceive the Medici by recommending policies designed to impede their reign and hasten a republican revival in Florence. This article surveys other alternative interpretations.

[5] *The Prince*, p. 55.

[6] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, 3rd ed., ed. and with an introduction by George Rogers Taylor (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1972). It is significant to note, in light of the argument made herein regarding the frontier as a manifestation of fortune, that Turner came to realize the significance of the frontier only after the Census Bureau noted its closing and subsequently deleted references to the "frontier line" of settlement in its 1890 report.

[7] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955). In spite of the apparent dominance of conservatism in American political life and ideology, this remains a particularly valuable work for understanding this nation.

[8] See Clinton Rossiter, *1787: The Grand Convention* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Carl Van Doren, *The Great Rehersal* (New York: Viking, 1948); Catherine Drinker Bowen, *Miracle at Philadelphia* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966); and John P. Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," *American Political Science Review*, 55 (December 1961), pp. 799–816.

[9] This view follows the Republican interpretation of American constitutional and historical experiences which I first encountered in the work of J. G. A. Pocock and Douglass Adair. See Z. S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans* (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 1945); H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience* (New York: Norton, 1965); Pocock, *The Machiavellian Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), and Pocock "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," *Politics, Language and Time* (New York: Antheneun, 1973); and Douglass Adair, "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science: David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth *Federalist*," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 20 (1956–57), 343–60, and Adair, "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 8 (1951), 48–67. For an introduction to the literature of the Republican interpretation, see Robert Shalope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Histiorography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 29 (1972), 49–80, and "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *ibid.*, 29 (1972), 49–80. For a critical view see, Isaac Kramnick, "Republican Revisionism Revisited," *American Historical Review*, 87 (June 1982), 629–64.

[10] See George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), pp. 154–55, and Gilbert Chinard, "Polybius and the American Constitution," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (1940), 38–58.

[11] Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), part 1.

[12] For the Propositions see Charles Beitzer, ed., *The Commonwealth of England: 1641–1660* (New York: Capricorn, 1963), pp. 14–19. For a discussion see Corrine Comstock Weston, *English Constitutional Theory and the House of Lords* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

[13] Martin Diamond, "The Federalist View of Federalism," *Essays in Federalism* (Claremont: Institute for Studies in Federalism, 1961).

[14] Samuel H. Beer, "Federalism, Nationalism and Democracy in America," *American Political Science Review* 72 (March 1978).

[15] I discuss this in my "Republicanism, the Theory of Indirect Elections and the Virginia Plan: Harrington, Hume and Madison," presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Denver, Colorado, March 26–28, 1981.

The Community College Scholar*

Linda Ching Sledge

CLARK KERR, FORMER chair of the Carnegie Council on Higher Education, recently described community colleges as "the great, surging segment of higher education" providing "youth service opportunities" that bring together the "now separate streams of work and education."[1] Yet, as one reviewer noted, this "great surging segment" was left out of *A Nation at Risk*, a controversial 1983 report on the nation's high schools. Prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the report scores four-year colleges and universities for neglecting to provide leadership in setting standards and monitoring programs that would "raise the sights of those who set the high schools' curricula."[2] The omission of community colleges from the report is striking not simply because community colleges currently employ one-third of all college teachers and enroll one-third of all college students but because they have been successfully engaged throughout their century-long history in doing exactly what the report claims colleges and universities have failed to do: facilitating the entry of high school graduates into the worlds of education and work.

Why do so many educators continue to discount the role of community colleges in higher education despite the valuable "youth service function" they provide? Despite record-setting enrollments in the 1970s? Despite the innovative approaches to student recruitment and basic-skills instruction that have gradually worked their way into even the most select universities?[3] Howard London, in his study of the attitudes of community college teachers, believes that educators' lack of interest in the work of two-year colleges is partly due to these institutions themselves. Because the recent growth spurt among two-year colleges has been a "gangling, awkward, adolescent one complete with problems of self-consciousness and self-identity," community college instructors find themselves in a limbo between high schools and four-year colleges and thus have enormous ambivalence when defining their own roles.[4] This in-between status is reinforced by the hiring practices of community colleges;

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administrators generally recruit teachers from the education layers that sandwich their institutions since there are only about a hundred programs expressly designed to train community college instructors. A 1976 survey by the Center for Community Colleges shows that 33 percent of the teachers come from high school faculties; 11 percent from four-year college faculties; 25 percent from graduate schools (with or without completed degrees); 5 percent directly from undergraduate institutions; and the remaining 25 percent from trades, government, and industry.[5] Unfortunately, the diversity of two-year teaching personnel and the pragmatism of two-year programs — the very qualities responsible for the success of community colleges as teaching institutions — accord these colleges scant prestige in educational circles, since, as London maintains, "higher cultural value tends to be placed on the production of new knowledge rather than the diffusion of what is already known."[6]

This essay will explore how the in-between character of community colleges has affected one segment of their faculties — the scholars — not only those 10 percent who trained for university teaching professions, earned traditional Ph.D.s in a dismal academic job market, and found themselves on the staffs of community colleges[7] but also any teaching personnel engaged in specialized research. To my mind, community college scholars have the same image problem as their home institutions: they, too, are judged hybrid creatures whose work is only tangentially related to the world of higher learning. Nor is this professional stereotyping likely to change for either institution or scholar. As London points out, the experience of feeling "uncomfortably alone and in between" seems to "come with the territory," since there is no "commonly agreed upon formula" for mixing the pragmatic concerns of community colleges with the more theoretical research pursuits of colleges and universities.[8] The community college scholar is viewed as an academic misfit bursting with arcane knowledge that is utterly useless in teaching high-risk students, and this stereotype is particularly potent because administrators appear to endorse it. Many of them hesitate to hire anyone with a Ph.D. because they believe that scholarly training makes teachers insensitive to the problems of effective instruction.[9] This bias does not hold true in every community college system: in the two-year colleges of the City University of New York, for example, a high percentage of the teachers hold Ph.D.s, and publishing is a requisite for advancement.[10] Nevertheless, nationwide hiring patterns show that only 8 percent of two-year colleges hire teachers with doctorates.[11] In a study of the "confused identity" of the community college teacher, Frances Jamerson affirms the administrators' typical suspicion of Ph.D. applicants; she observes that many administrators, convinced that the teaching mission of community colleges runs counter to the research aims of colleges and universities, believe that "the traditional academic mind can only serve to subvert the community

college from within," a perception that allows administrators to "legitimize" their disinterest in their faculty members' professional growth apart from teaching.[12] Lacking both institutional avenues for professional development and accessibility to the informal networks available to university professors, community college scholars have little visibility in professoral circles, even after years of study and writing. Moreover, the kinds of writing they have produced as a result of their academic environments and career compromises have yet to be defined or examined.

In seeking to create a place for themselves in an organization like the MLA, whose members are predominantly four-year college and university faculty members, community college scholars confront three thorny issues: coping with isolation and negative stereotyping on their own campuses and within the profession; affirming the unique scholarly perspective sparked by career readjustments; and, finally, making that perspective known in professional circles.

Let us first consider the problem of isolation. Cohen and Brawer report that community college teachers often feel unable to maintain their identity with higher education because of their heavy involvement with basic-skills instruction.[13] Although this kind of isolation is not limited to community college professors, it is decidedly more pronounced among them. The feeling of isolation may be particularly intense for the scholars in this group because they inhabit a culture that bears little relation to their primary goals and aspirations. Community college teachers have typically trained as something else, either as high school teachers or as university teachers; but while the former usually make the transition into the service culture of the community college very well, many of the latter find the career switch troubling, particularly if they have internalized the values of disinterested inquiry, an activity not generally rewarded in community colleges.[14]

I would maintain, nevertheless, that community college teachers who choose to pursue scholarship must to some extent resist "acculturation" — that is, resist being drawn into the narrow vocational milieu of the service institutions that employ them. The problem is threefold: commitment to research may conflict with the goals of an institution serving the pragmatic employment needs of a community; pursuing research for its own sake may mean further isolation on one's own campus; and finally, disinterested inquiry may be enormously difficult to sustain at a two-year campus. Heavy course loads (twice the teaching hours required of four-year college teachers) and the enervating effect of teaching high-risk students make it difficult to find the time and energy for specialized research and writing, the established route to visibility in scholarly circles. The absence of tangible rewards for research makes it all too easy for scholars to lose contact with their original fields of study, and if they never have

the opportunity to teach specialized electives, the need to keep up in their fields becomes less and less urgent. It would be easy simply to give up trying to publish. Nevertheless, a study undertaken by the Center for Community Colleges indicates that 61 percent of community college faculty members would spend more time on research and writing if given the opportunity.[15] The community college scholar thus struggles to disprove the common assumption that community college teachers publish less because they are less able, while also struggling to compete with scholars with more time and support for study.

Yet despite the difficulties, a significant number of community college faculty members do pursue specialized research; still others pursue research that may not be the theoretical kind for which they were originally trained. Neither group may recognize the expertise they have acquired in the course of revising their goals and adjusting to the community college culture. I have observed, for example, that those community college faculty members who write for an academic audience beyond the community college network have a particular constellation of talents: they are highly motivated and used to working alone, without the home-campus support and stimulation of associates, mentors, and graduate students in their fields. They are self-starters, having learned to recognize and seize new opportunities for research. Their research interests often become increasingly eclectic and pragmatic, since working conditions in community colleges preclude the close, sustained study possible for university professors who are granted released time, remuneration, and professional incentives. It is common, for example, for community college scholars who belong to the MLA to have several strings to their bows — one specialty directly related to their teaching, perhaps technical writing or creative thinking, as well as a more traditional one in language and literature. And many become expert in some practical academic specialty such as editing, compiling bibliographies, translating, or writing film criticism, nonspecialist literary history, or popular biography. What common thread can be discerned in these disparate concerns? David Jones has defined the best kind of community college research as "applied expertise," a "conscious search for new knowledge" that springs from the creative act of "doing what we teach."[16] Although some may find "applied expertise" unrelated to authentic scholarship, Jones's notion does successfully pinpoint the kind of research that many community college scholars do. This popular academic writing is no less difficult than the formal variety, merely different in kind. It may, in fact, be more difficult in some ways, for if it is to engage a wider, more diverse audience than a small circle of scholars and satisfy the commercial demands of a trade publisher rather than a university press, it must be lively and clear, qualities not generally endorsed by dissertation advisers. I would argue, then, that community college scholars are not a frustrated in-between people but a well-defined segment of the professoriat who

have, of necessity, developed a distinctive writing voice and pragmatic research concerns. The assumption that community college scholars all yearn to re-enter the university is a myth, at least among the most successful of them. One 1983 study of community college "master teachers" found that 95 percent felt that they were exactly where they wanted to be.[17]

Finally, I would argue that community college scholars can make their voices heard in professional bodies like the MLA. One area in which these scholars can make a substantial contribution is undergraduate literature and language. In a recently issued sequel to its scathing assessment of elementary and secondary schools, the National Institute of Education criticizes the nation's 3,300 universities and colleges for their inattention to the instructional needs of undergraduates, particularly freshmen. Community college scholars know exactly what constitutes "fine instruction" in freshman literary studies since they have been engaged in enriching the undergraduate curriculum all along. Moreover, they may serve to remind academics that there is ample room for generalist as well as specialized critical approaches to literature. Perhaps their skills can be put to use in profession-sponsored projects aimed at developing freshman and sophomore literature programs. Why not give community college scholars top editorial roles in pragmatic MLA publications like the Approaches to Teaching series? Why not invite community college faculty members to suggest innovations in developing undergraduate literary histories and anthologies? Why not encourage these scholars to join with colleagues from four-year institutions to design a volume on literary theory for undergraduates? Attention to theory, Gerald Prince has commented, could help literary studies and the humanities "reclaim part of their intellectual prominence."[18] Community college scholars can also be a valuable resource within the MLA in advising four-year college and university professors on the articulation of upper- and lower-division courses. In this instance, they can help make the present relationship between community colleges and four-year institutions less competitive and more supportive by calling attention to the overlapping of student populations and professorial talents and urging the interchange of ideas and programs. And they can serve as liaison between the universities and the high schools, a heretofore abandoned connection likely to be reforged under the current and sweeping movement for educational reform.

Community college scholars, in their turn, should expect a professional organization like the MLA to respond creatively and responsibly to establish a forum so that community college scholars can throw off their image of in-betweenness; the MLA can act as advocate for community college scholars by encouraging administrators to be more receptive to publishing as a means of advancement on local campuses; and the MLA can affirm, through changes in policy and structure, that among the large numbers of community college

faculty members are an active body of working scholars who deserve recognition and respect.

Notes

* Reprinted by permission of the Modern Language Association of America from *Profession 86* (1986), pp. 4–6.

[1] Clark Kerr, "Changes and Challenges Ahead for Community Colleges," *Community and Junior College Journal*, vol. 1 (1980), p. 4.

[2] Timothy S. Healy, "High Schools on the Brink," *New York Times Book Review*, May 13, 1984, p. 14.

[3] K. Patricia Cross, "Changing Student Populations and Community Colleges," *Community College Review*, vol. 10 (1983), p. 34.

[4] Howard London, "In Between: The Community College Teacher," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 448 (1980), p. 64.

[5] Doris Weddington, *Faculty Attitudes in Two Year Colleges* (Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1976), pp. 39–41.

[6] London, p. 72.

[7] J. Derek Harrison, "Ph.D. Faculty in Community Colleges," *Community College Review*, vol. 6 (1979), pp. 24–25.

[8] London, p. 73.

[9] Harrison, pp. 26–27.

[10] Daphne Siev White, "Community Colleges: Success Stories," *On Campus* (American Federation of Teachers Newsletter), vol. 3, no. 4 (1984), p. 9.

[11] Harrison, p. 25.

[12] Frances Jamerson, "The Community College Teacher: A Confused Identity," *Community College Frontiers*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1979), p. 5; and Peggy Munoz Simonds, "Scholarship and the Community College," *Community College Humanist*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1980), p. 2.

[13] Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer, *Confronting Identity: The Community College Instructor* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 113.

[14] London, pp. 63, 67–70.

[15] Arthur Cohen and Jack Friedlander, "What Do Two-Year College Instructors Want?" *Community College Review*, vol. 7 (1980), p. 67.

[16] David M. Jones, "Applied Expertise: A Redefinition of Research in Community Colleges," *Community and Junior College Journal*, vol. 53 (1982), pp. 41–42.

[17] Nancy Armes and Karen Watkins, "The Shadow Side of Teaching," *Community College Review*, vol. 11 (1983), p. 17.

[18] Gerald Prince, "Literary Theory and the Undergraduate Curriculum," *ADFL Bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1983), p. 1.

ESSAY REVIEWS

Private Lessons

William Askins

Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference, by Muriel Harris. Urbana, Il.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1986. 189 pp. $13.00.

THERE WAS A TIME in the history of my own college when the use of conferences to teach freshman composition became the subject of a controversy somewhat more intense than the usual academic flap. Responding to obscure pressures, college administrators found themselves alarmed at the news that classrooms into which heat and light were being poured at the taxpayer's expense were being emptied, that this was so because some English teachers were hardly ever meeting their classes, that this threatened to become something of a trend, and that these teachers, missing from their appointed stations, were using their time instead to hold private conversations with their students about their writing. The result was an interminable series of meetings at which English teachers were forced to defend their pedagogy first before quizzical administrators and then, repeatedly, before the college's board of trustees. Though the teachers involved were gradually worn thin by the proceedings, what eventually happened was what usually happens in situations like this, that is to say, nothing. I suspect that if everyone involved had had in hand a book like Muriel Harris's *Teaching One-to-One*, those meetings might have proven less empty and in retrospect less absurd, or, better yet, might never have taken place.

Harris's book is marked by a full and useful bibliography and continual reference to scholarship dealing with the use of conferences to teach compo-

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sition. Her discussion of this material is straightforward and commonsensical at virtually every turn and is characterized by frequent sallies into the work of social scientists who have theorized about casework and therapeutic scenarios which Harris believes are analogical to the writing conference. Her first chapter is given over to what she considers the advantages of this tutorial scheme: the provision of better "feedback," a redefinition of the teacher's role that precludes the idea that he or she is an authority figure, the development of the student-writer's ability to be self-critical and independent, and of course the improvement of writing skills. Skeptics might respond that these claims are commonly made of other teaching strategies, and many teachers might be tempted to ask why these results cannot be gotten through effective classroom teaching, but Harris's descriptions of studies of the impact of the writing conference provide some empirical evidence that her claims should be taken seriously. Community college teachers will want to notice that several of these studies were conducted in junior- and community-college settings and that most of these targeted remedial and developmental students at, for example, Marshalltown Community College and within the Los Angeles County Community College system.

Harris's second chapter defines the roles a teacher might assume during the conference and how it might best be organized. Within this context, there is a discussion of conference logistics bound to strike a nerve among those who do teach at community colleges. Citing the work of Lester Fisher and Donald Murray, Harris suggests that conferences are an economical use of the teacher's time, this based on the assumption that the typical composition teacher usually deals with about thirty students a semester. While this might be true at, say, Purdue, where Professor Harris is director of the writing laboratory, community college teachers, needless to say, routinely handle three to four times that many students each semester and may therefore find the writing conference, particularly as it is described here, considerably more draining than the author allows. Indeed, this seems especially likely in light of Harris's suggestion that teachers of composition serve not only as sounding boards for their students' writing but also as counsellors tendering advice about problems that interfere with the students' ability to concentrate on their studies. While this might be possible for a relatively homogeneous group of eighteen- or nineteen-year-old students, community college teachers, especially those in large urban centers, usually instruct nontraditional students of every age and with every conceivable kind of background, themselves frequently hungry for advice about an extraordinary range of problems. To turn discussions of papers into counselling sessions in this setting could easily lead (and I say this without any sense of exaggeration) to hundred-hour work weeks attended by a mounting sense of frustration at being drawn into conversations for which the teacher has neither

the energy nor the background to turn into a fruitful exchange. Community college teachers might therefore be forced to severely circumscribe Harris's description of the roles they should play during the writing conference. The result of that may be conferences of considerably less moment than those described in this book.

The third chapter of *Teaching One-to-One* surveys the kinds of activities in which teachers find themselves engaged in conference settings as well as the kinds of problems that surface in these exchanges. Here the author borrows heavily from recent work in the social sciences and proves particularly sensitive to the problems of learning-disabled students as well as students with different cultural backgrounds, this last subject one about which she has some interesting things to say. A fourth chapter summarizes recent wisdom about diagnostic procedures appropriate to the conference. There is an attractive emphasis here on the need to respond differently to the varying personalities and learning styles students present, and it is here too that the argument for individualized instruction finds its strongest support. Harris also provides a sketch of the diagnostic procedures that should be brought to bear on the students' written work, tactics of the sort which teachers familiar with the work of Mina Shaughnessy and her students will immediately recognize. A fifth and final chapter surveys strategies for teaching rhetorical and composing skills. There are hasty suggestions here about how a conference might be used as a vehicle for teaching prewriting skills and rather a lot of pointers about how to teach grammatical correctness and editing skills, which strike me as being more appropriate for the tutor in the writing laboratory than for the professor in conference. In general, this book should prove useful for students in graduate programs in rhetoric, for beginning teachers, for tutors and those who are responsible for training them. Despite its lack of an index it is nonetheless a volume worth having in a teacher's center for ready reference. Ultimately, its value to teachers of writing in secondary schools and colleges, the audience to which the book is pitched, will depend heavily, as I have indicated, on the material conditions under which those teachers teach or, in this case, confer.

However, for teachers of writing who also see themselves as teachers of the humanities, this book is bound to be thoroughly disappointing. Harris has nothing to say about how conferences might be used to help students gain access to significant texts or serious ideas of the kind which many feel should provide the point of departure for college writing assignments. If the examples of student papers discussed in the conferences described in her book are any indication of her feelings on this score, the author, for all her sensitivity and unquestionable seriousness, would seem to regard writing as an essentially trivial activity. I am responding here to discussions in this book of student papers which deal with such things as pet turtles, getting a tan in Florida during spring

break, eating in the school cafeteria, building model cars, and entering into a meaningful relationship with a cat.

The implication here would seem to be that the use of writing conferences and the abandonment of the classroom setting frees the student from any sense of a syllabus. Every piece of writing thrown on the table in this book has been squeezed out of one solipsism or another, and none of them strikes me as being particularly interesting. I do not mean to suggest that the personal essay is a genre beneath contempt or that writing of the sort normally required in freshman composition courses is not necessarily a form of self-exploration and self-expression. What I do suspect is that that self-expression would be considerably richer if students were encouraged to write papers about topics of consequence, papers which dealt with real problems or with their responses to texts written by others in which there are signs of genuine thought. Nor does such a definition of the writing appropriate to a college course preclude the use of a conference. I can easily imagine a freshman composition course in which students are presented with a detailed syllabus and a slew of significant reading material and are then invited to attend a series of conferences with their instructor during which the subject on the table would be not correct grammar but how the student might turn this question or that text into a paper that mattered.

At one point in her book, Harris employs the distinction between "high-context" and "low-context" cultures to warn writing teachers that students with Mediterranean and Oriental backgrounds, which are "high-context," are liable to find themselves ill at ease in "the dominant American culture," which is of course "low-context." Small wonder that Chinese students, for example, might find themselves hard pressed to knock off papers about pet turtles. Even if it is correct to describe American culture as "low-context" (and Harris is subscribing here to the descriptive terminology of an anthropologist, Edward Hall), it would seem that the thrust of a college or university writing course should be to fly in the face of what I suspect most educators would regard as a cultural liability. *Teaching One-to-One* would be a much more valuable book if the author had not undercut her argument by describing conversations about writing assignments which few would want to read, let alone use as the basis for a conference.

Harris's apparent satisfaction with context-free writing assignments is perhaps a sign of another aspect of her book which troubles. The NCTE, publishers of this book, has over the years also published a widely read journal, *College English*, which as everyone knows serves as a clearing-house for recent views about the philosophy of composition and theories regarding the nature of writing. While Harris may have been working under editorial constraints of which I am unaware, there is little reference in her book to this kind of material —

to, for example, the current preoccupation with writing across the curriculum or, say, the work of a Kenneth Bruffee, himself someone who has invested considerable energy even on extremely specific issues like the training of tutors.

Despite its excessively narrow focus, *Teaching One-to-One* is still a useful book. Despite, for example, Kenneth Bruffee's recent claims that writing is primarily social activity, one suspects nonetheless that good writing is the work of individuals and that the beginning writer needs the sort of mentoring and individualized instruction that the tutorial system described by Harris provides. This seems especially true for community college students for whom classroom instruction has frequently failed. If Harris had devoted part of her book to how her vision of the writing process meshes with current controversy about the nature of composition, her work would have been richer, but as it is, it is certainly worth a careful examination, even for readers who may never be summoned before trustees worried about English teachers who afford their students the luxury of private lessons.

Teaching Faculty to Teach Critical Thinking

Robert R. Lawrence

Teaching Students to Think Critically: A Guide for Faculty in All Disciplines, by Chet Meyers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986. 131 pp. $17.95.

CHET MEYERS IS a humanities professor at Metropolitan State University of St. Paul, Minnesota, a school that conceives of teaching as superior to research. There are thirty-five full-time "resident" faculty, but over 500 part-time "community" faculty at this institution, where Meyers coordinated faculty development and pioneered teaching seminars for eight years. "Resident" faculty received released time, while "community" faculty received $250 for attending Meyers' seminars, each of which consisted of six three-hour meetings. They met monthly, November through April. To enhance informality, meetings were held in faculty homes with highly cross-disciplinary membership to avoid intra-disciplinary discussions.

At the first meeting a resource person introduced Piaget's concept of "structures of thought" as a "metaphor for the development of new modes of problem solving and analysis" (p. 107). Each teacher defined critical thinking as he or she understood it in light of the pertinent discipline. No emphasis was placed on logic or problem solving. Quite the opposite: emphasis was placed on the individual discipline at the introductory level. Each instructor had to draw or diagram his or her particular method of critical thinking. Some were more humorous than satisfactory, but the result was richer, better teaching and better written assignments. Both the drawing and the photocopied written assignments had to be "role played" in a ten-minute presentation, which was followed by a fifteen-minute open-ended critique.

"The teachers often were embarrassed to discover that what had seemed clear to them individually was not always clear to the group" (p. 106). During the second year the group videotaped one another in the classroom, then offered critiques of each other. Although the seminars disbanded at the end of two

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years, individual "graduates" led new seminars. The facilitator was a "first among equals" who participated as a seminar member. The support and respect must have been excellent, as the seminars worked extremely well, positively affecting the teaching at the university. Meyers did not, however, add any student-response data showing how the new approach was received.

There is no single discipline (such as rhetoric or logic), according to Meyers, that subsumes critical thinking skills:

> Critical thinking is best taught through a variety of disciplinary perspectives that incorporate subjective elements of knowledge. Too much discussion of critical thinking focuses either on the discipline of logic or on general skills in problem solving. As long as critical thinking is conceived of exclusively as a form of logic or some watered-down version of the scientific method, the focus will remain purely instrumental, objective, and impersonal. Critical thinking needs to be freed from such a narrow frame of reference and expanded to include a variety of more openly subjective and personal perspectives [pp. 116-17].

Each teacher shares his or her method with colleagues and students from various careers and backgrounds. After all, "no two literature professors will have the same definitions of critical thinking or teach critical thinking skills in exactly the same manner" (p. 6).

As an undergraduate Meyers transferred from an engineering school to a liberal arts school as a sociology major. The general education course that he remembers as the most difficult was art appreciation because as a youth he "had no understanding of form, perspective, color or the traditions of the various schools of art" (p. 7). Critical thinking, then, means introducing our students to a *particular* critical thinking. There is no general critical thinking. Problem solving is itself a *particular* critical thinking process. Students will not voice inquiry and skepticism unless encouraged. They may not have the inquisitiveness and natural curiosity that we teachers had when we were students. The most important thing is to capture students' attention initially. Once curiosity is aroused, then the instructor must continue to present problems to be solved in the context of the particular course or discipline, constantly engaging students' interest, a challenge that must be met. This "takes time, patience, and the intentional design of classroom exercises and assignments that force students to practice critical thinking" (p. 10).

Meyers stresses throughout his text the need to draw or diagram the critical thinking desired. He quotes one literature professor as saying, "I was simply 'translating' that elusive process called 'thinking' into something that students could actually see (albeit metaphorically) and more easily grasp" (p. 18). That effort "became an organizing principle" for Meyers' professional-development seminars. It is a four-stage model comprised of different levels: (1) concrete,

sensory, (2) rational, (3) metaphorical, and (4) visionary, mythic. The professors in the seminar had to depict the kind of thinking they wanted their students to develop and put it on the chalkboard for their students to see. The drawings themselves, several of which Meyers reproduces, ranged from "an artistic representation of a tree, with key concepts on the branches, to a geometric design of overlapping circles, each circle represent[ing] a concept central to the course" (p. 21).

Critical thinking is not egocentric; it is conceptualizing abstractly, often using metaphors. Meyers says that studying Piaget helps us to conceptualize metaphorically how our students think, so that we can move them from egocentric (or at least limited, nonintellectual) thinking to critical thinking. This approach is not easy. It means taking class time from course content and, therefore, covering less material. First, the instructor must isolate the key concepts that he wants to teach and raise questions that students will want to explore. The instructor then backs off, becoming a facilitator who encourages students to develop abstract ideas. Finally, the students begin applying the concepts. This is easier, says Meyers, in the sciences than in the humanities since there is no equivalent to the scientific method in the humanities. He provides two examples of concepts used in a literature course: *hero/heroine* and *tragedy* as applied to *Oedipus Rex, Billy Budd,* and *Hedda Gabler.*

Three chapter titles make clear that Meyers confronts his readers with a challenge: "Structuring Classes to Promote Critical Thought," "Designing Effective Writing Assignments," and "Sharing, Challenging, Supporting: The Personal Side of Teaching Critical Thinking." In the chapter on writing assignments, Meyers promotes short summaries, suggesting that forcing students to formulate in their own words what they have read is far more valuable than having them write a research paper. The summaries accomplish the same purpose as the research paper, but the shorter paper allows more time for thinking and makes quick feedback from the instructor more feasible. Summarizing is rather like "sorting through a pile of rocks, looking for unpolished agates," *i.e.*, "essential concepts, issues, and principles" (p. 75). The instructor's response may take several forms:

(1) *A conference* — the best choice, but logistically we can have only a few.

(2) *Meaningful written comments* — carefully worded and brief, without the type of notation that students probably will not understand or bother questioning.

(3) *Structured response sheets* that make clear what the instructor looks for.

To teach this way is hard. At times it seems like organized chaos, with small active groups all talking at once. The instructor must move about listening to

students, making mild suggestions, then move on, welcoming questions and challenges. The instructor must, from time to time, admit "I, too, struggle to make sense of things" (p. 94).

In this small-group approach to teaching critical thinking, the instructor does not lecture. Rather, the instructor *works* — and it is as frustrating as coaching a team or advising a high-school newspaper staff or directing an amateur theater production. The instructor prompts and prods, attempts to capture the students' interest, and provides opportunities for learning, but does not lecture in the sense of providing facts to be regurgitated on an examination.

Behind many of Meyers' ideas lie Alfred North Whitehead's *The Aims of Education*, John Dewey's *How We Think*, and R. G. Fuller's *Multi-disciplinary Piagetian-Based Programs for College Freshmen*, as the reference section indicates. In short, the book relies on respected intellectual sources, provides a thorough discussion of the method Meyers uses, and presents us with the kind of challenge that can reinvigorate us all as teachers.

REPORTS

The Humanities and Remedial Education: Reflections on the San Francisco Conference

Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE of the Community College Humanities Association featured a series of related presentations in which talented teachers shared such understandings as they have reached about the nature and role of the remedial function. Probably the most interesting feature of these exchanges was that the theory behind the understandings, the implied but unarticulated crosstalk, was masked. Partly this is a matter of the ordinary defensive stance adopted by remedial educators. After all, the enthusiasm of the early days of experimentation and the development of new programs is long past, and the combination of tight budgets and changing priorities has put ever greater pressure on remedial programs to justify themselves to outsiders who cannot be assumed to be sympathetic. Symptomatic of the increasing sense of siege is a reluctance to air substantive, programmatic, or theoretical differences, perhaps for fear that opponents will seize upon such disagreements to justify reduced funding for remediation, which translates into reduced opportunities for the students who most need service from the community college.

In another article we try to show how the reluctance to engage in sustained public debate about the theory and practice of remedial education intersects in unfortunate ways with the institutional history of remedial efforts, producing a

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deep theoretical ambiguity in the practitioners' self-understandings of their efforts.[1] Put briefly, in the 1960s those efforts were primarily characterized as "remediation" which emphasized improvement of specific academic skills as a prelude to undertaking a traditional collegiate academic or vocational program. In other words, community colleges could be understood as engaged in traditional academic instruction with the only difference being that they admitted large numbers of students who required intensive work in specific skills before entering the regular curriculum. Thus "remediation" encouraged talk of "skills" and "skill deficiencies" understood in relatively isolated, discrete, and mechanical ways, which suggested to many that the solution lay in the development of appropriate educational technologies to replace the traditional practices of memorization and drill, which were perceived to have so obviously failed these students.

Partly in response to the failure of remedial programs successfully to move large numbers of underprepared students into the general curriculum, and partly a humanistic reaction to the widespread development of educational "technology," the past two decades have seen the emergence of the notion of developmental education, which for many persons has begun to displace remediation as the guiding conception of their enterprise. "Developmental" educators have argued that bringing students "up to college level" in their "basic skills," the concern that had dominated remedial programs, was only a part and perhaps not the most important part of what the community college ought to be doing for remedial students. Drawing on a rich set of educational, psychological, political, and even ethical traditions, they contended that the fact that few of these students successfully made the transition from their special precollege programs into the traditional curriculum did not show those programs to be failures. "Developmental" programs were instead to be understood as encouraging and facilitating the full mental, moral, and emotional growth of students, whose lives might be enriched by their coming to know, to appreciate, and ultimately to express their full selves as members of society and as members of their social and racial minority. Developmental practices and strategies conceived with the objectives of developing personal consciousness, of changing affective styles, of encouraging social competence, of enriching the lives of students, their families, and their communities — despite the fact that the success of such efforts is notoriously difficult to evaluate — were progressively combined with the more traditional practices of remediation. This combination of approaches, which occurred within so many programs during the seventies and eighties, is in many ways astonishing, since each approach draws on very different sources for its sense of mission, its underlying epistemology, vocabulary, and practice. Indeed, each has explicitily defined itself against the other and sought to characterize itself as trying to accomplish different ends by different

means and for different reasons. So we now find an ambiguous relationship between the two, which is expressed in the common tendency to unself-consciously refer to "remedial/developmental" programs without acknowledging the depth or breadth of thier differences.

Although an understandable defensiveness leads remedial and developmental teachers to blur their most profound differences, they are perfectly clear and quite vocal about the difficulties and ambiguities of their social role. The most important features of that role seem to be these:

1. Remedial programs are largely staffed by English department faculty who function as uncomfortable and somewhat unwilling "gatekeepers" standing between the student and the college-level curriculum. This social fact produces serious personal and moral dilemmas for faculty who identify strongly with a humanistic orientation as they try to serve their students while also making the authoritative judgments that will determine their future. Inevitably they are viewed warily by students and judgmentally by other faculty.

2. Although the gatekeeping function is created by standard bureaucratic practices of mandatory admissions testing, placement, and exit criteria for remedial courses, it is the faculty that must constantly face and manage student frustrations, anger, and resentment. These educators must try to "do good" with unwilling and sometimes sullen students who often do not understand why they are required to be in precollege programs that seem to have little connection with their educational and career goals. The emotional disruptions and dissonances remedial educators characteristically face has led them to search for classroom activities that are consonant with their professional judgment but that can also be expected to reduce student anger and resentment.

3. The role of the remedial and developmental teacher is further complicated by the tensions associated with issues of race and class. In urban community colleges around the country when one enters remedial programs one finds largely white, middle-class, female teachers working with largely black, lower-class students. These racial and class issues present profound difficulties for classroom management, as well as for the nature and the legitimacy of the curriculum.

The background of the panel presentation and the round-table exchange at the San Francisco conference is complicated. Developmental and remedial notions, theoretically alternatives to each other, have gradually merged in the classroom and in the explanations teachers offer to one another and to outsiders about the nature of their practice. Thus we find that both the medical metaphors of remediation and the messianic metaphors of development are routinely deployed interchangeably. This theoretical confusion is unfortunate to the extent that it allows premature termination of analysis and conversation, but it is

nevertheless perfectly understandable as an expression of the profound difficulty of the educational problem, the ambiguous charge from funding sources, and the conflicting demands of the actual classroom setting.

The discussions and exchanges at the San Francisco conference helped both to display and to clarify these tendencies to neglect the question of theoretical differences. For instance, the appearance of agreement was easily attained by the common identification by all the speakers of a merely "mechanical" drill-and-review approach to skills instruction as the polemical opposition. Of course, everyone still uses the vocabulary of "skills," even insisting that those skills be stacked or sequenced. But in every case skills are talked about as emerging within a program that exhibits a particular conception of humanities education. Programs and courses thus become as varied as are the varied understandings of the humanities. For instance, the view of the humanities that sees a common cultural canon at the center of attention was represented by a teacher who urged that high-quality literature ought to provide the content of remedial reading programs. The reason given for this was an appeal to classical aesthetics, that beauty is definitive of a common humanity and appeals equally to us all. The great achievements of the Western canon of literature thus ought not be arbitrarily denied to the remedial student. An interesting alternative view was that texts ought to be chosen with a view to heightening students' personal, social, and especially political awareness. Here the commonplace that the humanities are liberating is taken quite literally, as students are seen as struggling, under the guidance of politically aware faculty, to come to understand and appreciate their own position as black, Hispanic, female, or working-class. Now one might think that these two accounts of the remedial/developmental classroom are as opposed as right-wing and left-wing educational views can be, but the various proponents of each at the conference were content to deny their differences and to fight against attempts to display those differences, claiming that they actually agreed about all important matters and that they were all trying to do the same thing. Partly this seems to be made possible by the tendency to be so caught up in the day-to-day classroom struggle, fraught so deeply with its own ambiguities, that faculty became mired in a corresponding ambiguity about both the nature of the problem and the nature of the solution. For instance, are course content and the context of instruction altered to teach skills more effectively, to motivate and retain students in remedial programs, or because a certain content and certain activities are worthwhile in themselves?

The second set of speakers attempted to change the terms of the conversation in interesting ways and implicitly defined themselves as in disagreement with earlier presenters. One argued that skills development, the traditional goal of remediation, cannot be supposed to be a mere indirect

consequence of instruction in some one or other of the varied notions of humanities education. Rather, skills instruction is to be abstractly conceived as an exercise in linguistic anthropology in which students and teachers become partners in research, with the goal of that research being the students' competence in a new language community. Of course, this view also joins in the polemic against mechanical methods, stressing that literacy is not a series of codes or sets of surface conventions but instead must be understood as embedded in a social context with its associated tacit tradition of texts. Again, the existence of the same polemical opponent and the analysis of language communities as partly constituted by traditions of canonical texts masked the differences between this approach and the previous ones. Outsiders might think that an analysis of the problem of literacy that is self-consciously proposed as proceeding within a social-scientific framework would be at pains to differentiate itself from an account that reflects traditional aesthetics or romantically conceived notions of liberation through political action, but that was not the case.

The fourth and final speaker tried to confront what is perhaps the most crushing problem confronting front-line teachers: what are the "stories we tell our students" to justify our requirements and practices? Since remedial/developmental programs have implicity proposed a narrative plot in which the romantically conceived individual student struggles for success against tremendous odds, teachers have felt moral qualms about their relationship to the vast majority of their students who are not destined for success, however mightily they may struggle. Teachers and students thus often confront one another ultimately as the misleaders and the misled, with the inevitable breakdown of the mutual trust that is certainly a necessary precondition for the educational enterprise. This speaker saw the implied but muted conflicts among the other presenters as symptomatic of the efforts to find a meaning for remedial/developmental courses that might be shared by both teachers and students. In other words, remedial/developmental efforts at community colleges can be thought of as consisting largely of an attempt to devise narrative plots that students and teachers can accept as both meaningful and realistic.

The San Francisco exchange thus implicitly raised the most fundamental issues about remedial and developmental education. Given the range of justifying vocabularies, the wide diversity of practices associated with very different cognitive, aesthetic, and even social/political theories, given the diversity of the conceptions of the humanities, and given the very real and pressing social and economic plight of many remedial students, the most useful efforts toward improving the remedial function and the position of the humanities relative to it would be ethnographic. If we can discover the real relation, as opposed to the advertised relation, between our theories and our

practice, between what we do and what we purport to do, we would have come a long way toward sorting out the possibilities for our remedial students, our institutions, and ourselves.

Note

[1] Dennis McGrath and Martin B. Spear, "The Politics of Remediation," in *Teaching the Developmental Education Student*, ed. Kenneth M. Ahrendt, New Directions for Community Colleges, no. 57 (Spring 1987).

Implementing the International Dimension: A Welcome Imperative

Maxwell C. King and Seymour Fersh

AN INCREASING NUMBER of community colleges are adding an international dimension to their curriculum and services. This development, however, is not yet widespread among our colleges for many reasons, including lack of leadership from our own college presidents and specific opposition from many boards of trustees, local and state legislators, and spokespersons for community associations and media. Differences of opinion about the appropriateness of adding an international dimension to our community colleges are based on fundamental beliefs concerning what the guiding philosophy, educational policies, and functions of our colleges should be.

Let us consider these questions with direct reference to an international dimension — a descriptive term we prefer over "international education" because we include within it all programs, projects, studies, and activities that help an individual to learn and care more about the world beyond his or her nation, and to transcend culture-conditioned ethnocentric perspectives, perceptions, and behavior. Moreover, such dimensions should not only increase one's knowledge but also enhance one's wisdom and affinity with humanity.

Community colleges have a responsibility to include an international dimension because our more than 1,250 institutions affect more Americans than any other component of the U.S. postsecondary educational system; we have about 5 million persons in credit courses and an additional 4 million in noncredit courses. Sixty percent of all students pursuing postsecondary education today began this experience in community colleges or vocational/technical institutes, and "40% of the first-time full-time freshman undergraduates in the U.S. whose goal is the bachelors degree enrolled in a community, junior, or technical college in Fall 1983."[1]

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Evolution of the International Dimension

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE is constantly evolving — more so than any other American educational institution. Our colleges were purposely created in response to new conditions and are expected to be responsive; we are also expected to initiate and lead. By definition and desire, the community college was designed, in the words of President Truman's Commission on Higher Education, "to serve chiefly local community education needs. . . . Its dominant feature is its intimate relations to the life of the community it serves." The report of that commission, in 1947, also included the expressed hope that these new community colleges would include concern with "the adequacy of curricula, particularly in the fields of international affairs and social understanding."[2]

The definition of the commission is still relevant; community colleges "should serve chiefly local community education needs," but the definition of "community" must be broadened to include the state, nation, and world community. This broadening has already occurred in the "real world" where the boundaries of these political subdivisions have been transcended by economics, ecology, and technology. We must recognize that we live in an increasingly global environment, in terms of the products and services we exchange, the energy and clean air upon which we depend, and the very survival and well-being of our local community within a world community. An international dimension in the community college is no longer optional; it must become an integral part of what we are and what we are becoming.

Changes in Local Community Education Needs

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, in determining what actions it should take, often uses a "needs assessment" survey. The following brief references can help alert us to specific ways in which our communities have been affected by overall changes in the past forty years; these changes impact differently on each community but are also increasingly widespread.

Foreign Student Enrollments. Foreign student enrollments in U.S. colleges and universities have increased from 9,600 students in 1930 to about 350,000 in 1986. Of this number, about half are undergraduates of whom about 48,000 (14.2 percent of all foreign students in the United States) are in community colleges. Financing for these students comes mainly from their own or family funds (about two-thirds); our colleges provide less than 1 percent, with the remaining funds provided by their home governments and about 5 percent from the U.S. government. The total number of foreign students since 1949 is more than 2 million; they currently represent an annual "invisible export" of about $2 billion.[3]

Foreign Tourism and Trade. Tourism now ranks fourth as a U.S. "export"; the total number of international tourists last year was more than 24 million and is

now larger than the number of Americans who travel abroad. Foreign investors in recent years have been spending over $20 billion annually. These tourists and investors add international dimensions to many communities and affect each community's educational needs. The export of U.S. goods and services is now about 13 percent of the U.S. gross national product — double the percentage of ten years ago; imports have shown about the same degree of growth. About one in six U.S. jobs is related to international trade and one in three farm acres is harvested for export. All of these statistics, reported regularly in newspapers, indicate that Americans increasingly need to develop an awareness and understanding of other peoples and cultures.

Technical Assistance and Educational Exchanges. Until a few years ago, the U.S. community college was neither well known nor much respected abroad, but conditions have changed. Every week delegations of foreign government officials and educators come to our campuses to learn more about them, especially about how we train and educate workers for technology-related occupations and how we involve community people in cooperative educational efforts. As a result of such visits, many of our colleges have entered into bilateral agreements involving technical-assistance assignments abroad for our faculty and faculty-exchange programs that have strengthened the international dimension of partnership colleges. These international programs help community colleges to improve their educational services to their own communities by facilitating significant faculty development.

Challenges to U.S. Community Colleges

IN CONTRAST TO the narrower view that community colleges should restrict their vision and efforts to the local community, there are increasing, insistent challenges that we provide leadership and implementation so that our students and communities can compete effectively and contribute to the world community. These challenges come, appropriately, from all levels of our society.

From the State Level. In Florida, for example, international commerce is the fastest growing sector of the economy; by 1982 it had increased almost ten times over what it had been ten years earlier.[4] Resolutions were recently passed in the state Senate and House of Representatives which "recognize and support the components of international education in higher education of the state"; moreover, former Governor Graham was a strong advocate of the internationalization of Florida. In other states, such as California, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington, and Texas, consortia of community colleges have been organized to advance international dimensions.

From the National Level. In 1978, the U.S. commissioner of education urged our colleges "to lead the way in rebuilding our commitment to international

education. I am concerned that our community colleges can and must take the initiative on this crucial agenda."[5] In 1979, the president's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies delineated the unique contribution community colleges can and should make:

> Our community colleges — which constitute a widely dispersed network committed to accessibility and community education, and whose students reflect the social, economic, ethnic, and occupational diversity of American society — should have a central role in the Commission's charge to recommend ways to extend the knowledge of our citizens to the broadest population base possible.[6]

From the National Leadership of Community Colleges. In 1978, Edmund Gleazer, the president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, said: "If people in this nation are confronted with issues that transcend international boundaries and if education has responsibility in qualifying them to deal with these issues, then the community college, beyond any other post-secondary institution, requires an international dimension."[7]

In 1982, the new president of the AACJC, Dale Parnell, and its Board of Directors noted that education for international/intercultural understanding has become an imperative for Americans and recommended that "our colleges should establish clear institutional goals and policies that advocate international dimensions throughout their institutional program."[8] Also, the AACJC provides leadership for its International/Intercultural Consortium, which has a membership of about eighty-five colleges. Specifically the AACJC, in its 1987 Public Policy Agenda, included for the first time in its "Mission Statement" a section which identifies as a national priority the international dimension of the community college. The agenda notes that America will be working "in an increasingly international economic environment" and encourages more member colleges to "become active in the AACJC International/Intercultural Consortium and in other international education activities." It also encourages "the federal government to include to a greater degree community, technical, and junior colleges in matters of international education and training."[9]

From the International Level. The United States has been fortunate in having friends and observers from other countries who can help us see ourselves as others do. Such a person is Soedjatmoko, who was ambassador to the United States from Indonesia and is now the chief executive officer of the United Nations University in Tokyo. In 1969, Soedjatmoko wrote that "we Asians living in the United States feel a faltering sense of direction and faith in America's commitments to herself and to what is best within her. We worry because this dream is not yours alone; it belongs to mankind."[10] In 1984, in a speech at an international conference in the United States, he said that "only as one human community do we have any real hope of beginning the next century in dignity,

harmony and civility. . . . The common survival of humanity . . . is going to require unprecedented levels of mutual understanding and tolerance and much higher levels of international people-to-people co-operation than ever before. . . . Like it or not, we have a common future."[11] Community college educators understand and feel the aspirations Soedjatmoko expresses because we have led the way in helping enhance the quality of our national community. We must now share that leadership internationally as well.

Responding to Changing Conditions and Challenges

AT BREVARD COMMUNITY College, the international dimension has been broadened and strengthened rapidly because the administration and faculty have secured the support of the Board of Trustees and the local community. The county is greatly benefited by international tourism and commerce; it is also the home of the Kennedy Space Center. Educational philosophy and policies, however, are not only concerned with economic values and not only with "internationalizing the curriculum," but also with adding transcultural dimensions to the general education of our students.

This kind of education is advanced by using all dimensions of the college. For example, Brevard enrolls each year about 225 foreign students from about thirty countries; enrolls about an equal number of its own students in summer-abroad programs; and has provided within the past five years about 150 short-term international assignments for over 100 of its faculty members. Faculty development is, of course, directly related to curriculum and community development. In Brevard's approach to general education through international dimensions, the faculty is especially crucial because we want to achieve our purposes not by requiring specific content-centered international studies courses, but mainly by having teachers and administrators who themselves have had transcultural experiences.[12]

This kind of international learning can help one become more self-educating and culture-creating, and to experience a sense of humility ("freedom from pride and arrogance") by realizing how much one's own assumptions dominate one's creativity. It is, after all, difficult for the mind to "change its mind" because it has been so carefully influenced to think in culturally approved ways. By encountering minds otherwise conditioned, one becomes more aware of how to transcend one's own cultural conditioning — a capacity that will become more necessary and welcome as time goes on.

Brevard has also provided leadership for a consortium of thirteen community colleges (twelve in the United States and one in Canada) — the Community Colleges for International Development, Inc. (CCID) — which was organized in 1976. From its inception, CCID has been concerned with

developing international projects to assist others and also to help facilitate faculty and curriculum development in its own member colleges. CCID is now in its eighth year of a bilateral agreement with the Republic of China and in the seventh year of a bilateral agreement with the Republic of Suriname. Additional projects include faculty-exchange assignments worldwide. To increase its effectiveness and services, CCID has also created a new affiliate-member category.[13]

In 1982, CCID, the Organization of American States, and Suriname jointly sponsored a conference in Paramaribo that was also attended by representatives from five other nearby countries. The spirit of the conference, "Mid-Level Manpower Technical/Vocational Training Projects," was expressed by Suriname's minister of education when he said,

> Though there are notable differences in social outlook between a country such as the United States and some other Caribbean countries . . . assistance is being given according to our needs as defined by ourselves, . . . a process which may be developed into an international model in which international cooperation transcends political differences.[14]

The International Dimension: A Welcome Imperative

WITHIN A GLOBAL society, all nations must provide examples of good neighborly behavior. From the United States must also come responsible leadership and a greater sharing of resources, human and material, because of our greater economic development and commitment to human rights. Within our country, no institutions have more responsibility and opportunity to provide these examples than do our community colleges. We have demonstrated this kind of leadership for our own nation; we must now extend our sense of kinship to the global community. The sense of community need not be merely territorial; the origin of the word can inspire us anew: it comes from the Latin *communis*, which is composed of *com*, meaning "together," and *munis*, meaning "ready to be of service" — "ready to be of service together."

The question is no longer whether the community college should have an international dimension — it must. The questions are: To what extent? In what ways? For what purposes? These questions can best be answered by each college; also, each college needs to re-examine the questions and answers continuously. This process is something our colleges can do well because we are in constant communication with our communities. We must also be in constant communication with the international dimensions of our human community — a welcome imperative.[15]

Notes

[1] *ERIC Digest* (Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, June 1984), p. 1.

[2] George B. Vaughan, "President Truman Endorsed Community College Manifesto," *Community and Junior College Journal*, vol. 53, no. 7 (April 1983), pp. 22, 24.

[3] Malcolm G. Scully, "One Million Students at U.S. Colleges, Triple Present, Seen Likely by 1990," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 21, 1981, pp. 1, 13; and *News Release* (New York: Institute of International Education, December 1, 1986).

[4] *Directory of International Education Resources in Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla., Spring 1984), p. 2.

[5] Ernest L. Boyer, keynote address given at the fifty-eighth annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Atlanta, Georgia, April 10, 1978. *Community and Junior College Journal*, vol. 49, no. 6 (March 1979), pp. 14-19.

[6] *Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability: A Report to the President from the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies.* (Washington, D.C.: President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, November 1979), p. 161.

[7] Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., "To Transcend the Boundaries," *The Foreign Student in United States Community and Junior Colleges* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1978), p. 5.

[8] "AACJC Board Adopts Statement on the Role of International/Intercultural Education in the Community Colleges," *AACJC International/Intercultural Consortium Newsletter* (May 1982), pp. 1-2.

[9] *Community and Junior College Journal*, vol. 57, no. 4 (February/March 1987), p. 38.

[10] Soedjatmoko, "A Foreign Visitor's View of the United States," *Social Education* (November 1969), p. 822.

[11] Soedjatmoko, *Global Crossroads: Educating for Responsible Choices* (New York: Center for Global Perspectives, May 17, 1984), pp. 1, 6.

[12] See Maxwell C. King and Seymour Fersh, "General Education Through International/Intercultural Dimensions," in *General Education in Two-Year Colleges: New Directions for Community Colleges*, ed. B. Lamar Johnson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982).

[13] Contact CCID c/o Executive Director James G. Humphrys, Brevard Community College, Cocoa, Fla. 32922.

[14] Seymour Fersh and James G. Humphrys, *Carribbean Conference: Mid-Level Manpower Technical/Vocational Training Projects* (Cocoa, Fla.: Brevard Community College, 1982), p. 16.

[15] For an introductory essay with bibliography, see Seymour Fersh, "International Education and the U.S. Community College: From Optional to Integral," *ERIC Junior College Resource Review* (Spring 1983).

The Several Strands of a Stunning Harmony

Myrna Goldenberg

IT IS UNAVOIDABLE. The plethora of papers on the quality of American higher education compels us to assess some of the components under fire — ourselves as teachers, our colleges and universities, and the courses we teach. I propose that there is an urgent need to redirect the teaching of the humanities, not back to 1950, or 1800, or 1600, or 1400, but rather to redirect our teaching so that it is purposefully empowering.

To begin with, let us iterate why we teach the humanities. For me, there are three equally compelling reasons: first, to preserve and transmit our legacy, a legacy that includes the best that has been thought and said and much of what is true — even when that truth is not a source of pride. Second, we study the humanities to reinforce and perpetuate whatever it is that is human and noble in ourselves. And, third, we would certainly agree that the ultimate end of the humanities is to enable men and women to participate knowledgeably, morally, and responsibly in a free society. The whole teaching-learning process is filtered through individuals, who confront the literature and measure their worth against the works, drawing strength from them or discarding them. Our challenge, then, as teachers of the humanities is to present literary works that are empowering, not intimidating. The list of central texts we use as we teach values, sensitivity, critical thinking, and a body of knowledge — in short, the canon — needs to be opened, to be expanded so that it reflects our students: the pluralistic tapestry of this nation, the several strands that are woven into a stunning harmony.

Like many students and faculty, I urge the redefinition of the legacy that is currently being reclaimed. Like most of us, I am not easily categorized — not in my private, family, or professional life. I majored in literature, am a doctoral candidate studying the history of higher education, and use history to inform my literature classes and literature to illuminate the history I study and write about. I

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am student, teacher, wife, mother, daughter, friend, colleague, neighbor, activist, and feminist. I "contain multitudes," and I "dwell in Possibility." I cannot identify with the giants in the classical canon, who have, at best, rendered me marginal and, at worst, invisible. As a result of growth, and the pain commonly and ordinarily involved in growth, I have revied my perspectives and crossed and recrossed lines and boundaries until finally it became quite clear to me that the classical canon does not serve as my (or my students') model, but rather as *a* model, *a* canon, as distinct from *the* canon.

Scholars, educators, politicians, and social critics have said that the traditional canon is inadequate. I offer the proposition that we have been using the humanities to restrict the boundaries of experience when we should have been using them to explore the universe of experience. We have been exclusive when we should have been inclusive. The works we teach must present choices to our students, reasonable though not necessarily pleasant choices, recognizable though not necessarily welcome choices. Our students must see possibility that is empowering. The works we present must reflect the concept that an ordinary life has the potential, even in its ordinariness, to be noble and to ennoble others.

To achieve this purpose, we need to "reclaim a legacy," but not the remote legacy of an exclusive, all-white, upper-class Greek, Roman, British, German, and later American male minority. We need to empower our students by providing literature that engages them, first through recognition, then through idealization and emulation, and finally through inspiration. We need to avoid the reclamation of a legacy that overpowers, rather than empowers. The texts that comprised the canon twenty, forty, or sixty years ago do not speak to our students with the same authenticity they had for the elite few who attended college in the first half of this century. The intervening years have exposed the fallibility of the authority of the traditional canon, though not necessarily the truths those works invite readers to examine. This century has proved that those who share the same legacy do not necessarily share the same values. Students in the post-1960s college classroom do not share common experiences or common definitions of fundamental concepts. How then can our students share a classical canon? They can. They can share a common set of questions, questions that will engage their minds and encourage fruitful debate.

The "sacred" texts of a revised canon should be those that inform its readers of the art and drama and joy of meaningful existence. These works should respond to questions that stimulate their readers into dialogue with other men and women; they should spur the reticent to duty, and the passive to participation. They should liberate their readers and prepare people for citizenship, to enable all of us to rediscover civic connections and community bonds. They hold the virtue of connectedness higher than the trait of autonomy.

The works we include in the canon, in other words, must encourage us to preserve and perpetuate community, an old-fashioned concept that confronts an equally old-fashioned idea of rugged individualism. One is not intrinsically better than the other; rather, one is more valued in this time and place and, indeed, has the potential to ensure moral survival on the planet.

One of the challenges, then, of the humanities may well lie in restructuring the canon so that it reflects our diversity. The canon can empower us only as it reflects our pluralism, our variousness, and our differences. I don't believe we serve our students, and their grandchildren, by re-creating the same set of circumstances that undervalued me, as a woman, and blacks and Hispanics, and native Americans, and Asian-Americans. That legacy disempowered all but a few. We need to recover the literature that portrays our struggles, our pains, the business of the "heart in conflict with itself." Our grandchildren must read accounts of women who broke the bonds of slavery. They must read Linda Jacobs' account of her seven years in hiding as a runaway slave alongside Frederick Douglas' narrative of his bondage and freedom. They must study Dickinson, not "Emily," if they study Keats, not "John." They must read Wollstonecraft, Fuller, and Sojourner Truth if they read Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau. Their instructors must admit that an appreciation of Kate Chopin is more likely to be "contagious" than an appreciation of James Fenimore Cooper.

I am not proposing the destruction of our legacy. I am merely questioning the purposes behind perpetuating a legacy that has worked for and portrayed only a very small portion of humankind.

No canon should be fixed for all time. A major problem with our curriculum — and the canon is at the heart of the curriculum — is that it speaks to the few, providing them with justification for building a fence around their favorite works. Until the canon is expanded to include the several strands, we will not be able to justify teaching this list of works, not in a community college, not in a four-year college, not in a research university supported by public funds. The works we teach must offer our students the opportunity for success, for growth. Students must see themselves in potential, as characters who fail and succeed; they must be able to identify with characters in the works and not feel forced into silence.

If the canon is truly the list of books that defines our culture and constitutes our legacy, and if that legacy expands as a function of scholarship on women and minorities, then the canon must be organic — growing to accommodate an expanding list of works. At the least, let us consider Frank Kermode's comparison of the canon to the Torah (the rabbinical commentary on the Old Testament), which grew voluminous as it recorded arguments and counter-arguments, one interpretation poised against an equally compelling inter-

pretation, and always a harmony encompassing several strands and strains of "right" thinking.

There are risks, to be sure; once the canon takes on its necessary fluidity, Nobody will become Somebody and live in Possibility. Then Everybody will share in the canon's power and thus nobody will be all-powerful. We will finally be forced to state our criteria explicity and understandably. Perhaps, the "damned mob of scribbling women" of all hues will gain voices and imbue the canon with vivid color. Readers, our students, will then recognize their struggles and will pull strength from works that mirror their lives — for example, Morrison's seamy landscapes, Olsen's silent dialogues with society, and Rich's watery depths. The humanities lead us to realities, mine and those of others. If my reality is omitted, I do not see myself as a participant in the main streams of the community. Like Ellison's narrator, I will be invisible, not only to you but also to myself.

If the humanities are to be re-established as a significant and substantial segment of the undergraduate curriculum, then surely readers and students must find some familiar characteristics and virtues in their reading, characteristics that are distinct and distinctive and virtues that are common to the varieties of cultures in this nation. Loss of identity is disempowering to individuals and to groups, making them marginal persons who cannot contribute to society sincerely or significantly.

I want to teach from a canon that neither assumes nor prefers that my students are white or that they "think like a man." As humanities teachers we have the obligation to provide texts — a canon — with which our students connect. That connection will help them link themselves to the historical chain and, thus, to a legacy. Furthermore, education in the 1980s assumes the fact of our differences and encourages us to engage with one another on a level that values those differences. Our moral responsibility is to discover ways of ennobling our lives because of and in spite of differences, to weave the strands of our separate selves into a stunning harmony.

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